The Color Guide To Govardhana Hill

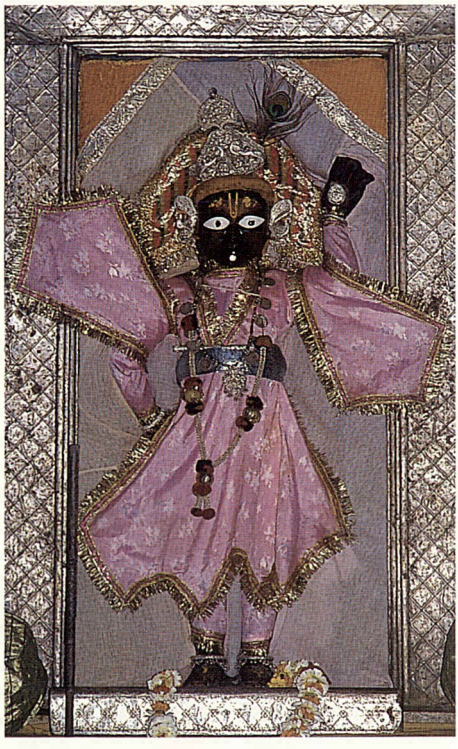
India's Most Sacred Mountain

Rājaśekhara dāsa Brahmacārī

Sunset at Pañca-tirtha-kuṇḍa

GOVARDHANA HILL

INDIA'S MOST SACRED MOUNTAIN



Written and photographed by
Rājaśekhara dāsa Brahmacārī

VEDANTA VISION PUBLICATIONS

His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swāmī Prabhupāda

Founder-Ācārya International Society for Kṛṣṇa Consciousness

This book is dedicated to
the sacred memory of
our beloved spiritual master

His Divine Grace
A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swāmī
Prabhupāda

whose last wish was to perform
Govardhana Parikramā.

A view of Govardhana Hill near Annakūṭa-kṣetra

Pronunciation Guide

The italicized Sanskrit words that appear throughout this book are spelled in a phonetic system that lets you know how to say each word.

Pronounce short a like the **u** in **b**u**t**, long **ā** like the a in **f**a**r** (and held twice as long as the short a). Pronounce e like the a in ev**a**de, long **i** like the **i** in p**i**que. Pronounce the vowel **ṛ** like the **ri** in **ri**m, and **c** like the **ch** in **ch**air. Pronounce consonants like **ch**, **jh**, and **dh** as in staun**ch**-heart, hedge-**h**og, and red-**h**ot. Pronounce **ś** and **ṣ** like **sh**. So for *Kṛṣṇa* say KRISHNA, for *Caitanya* say CHAITANYA.

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On the books cover: *A herd of cows resting at Govardhana Hill*
Inside front and back cover: *Sunset at Panca Tirtha-Kunda*
Back cover: *Top: Cows walking past Govardhana Hill.*
Mukharavinda Mandira, Manasi-Ganga.

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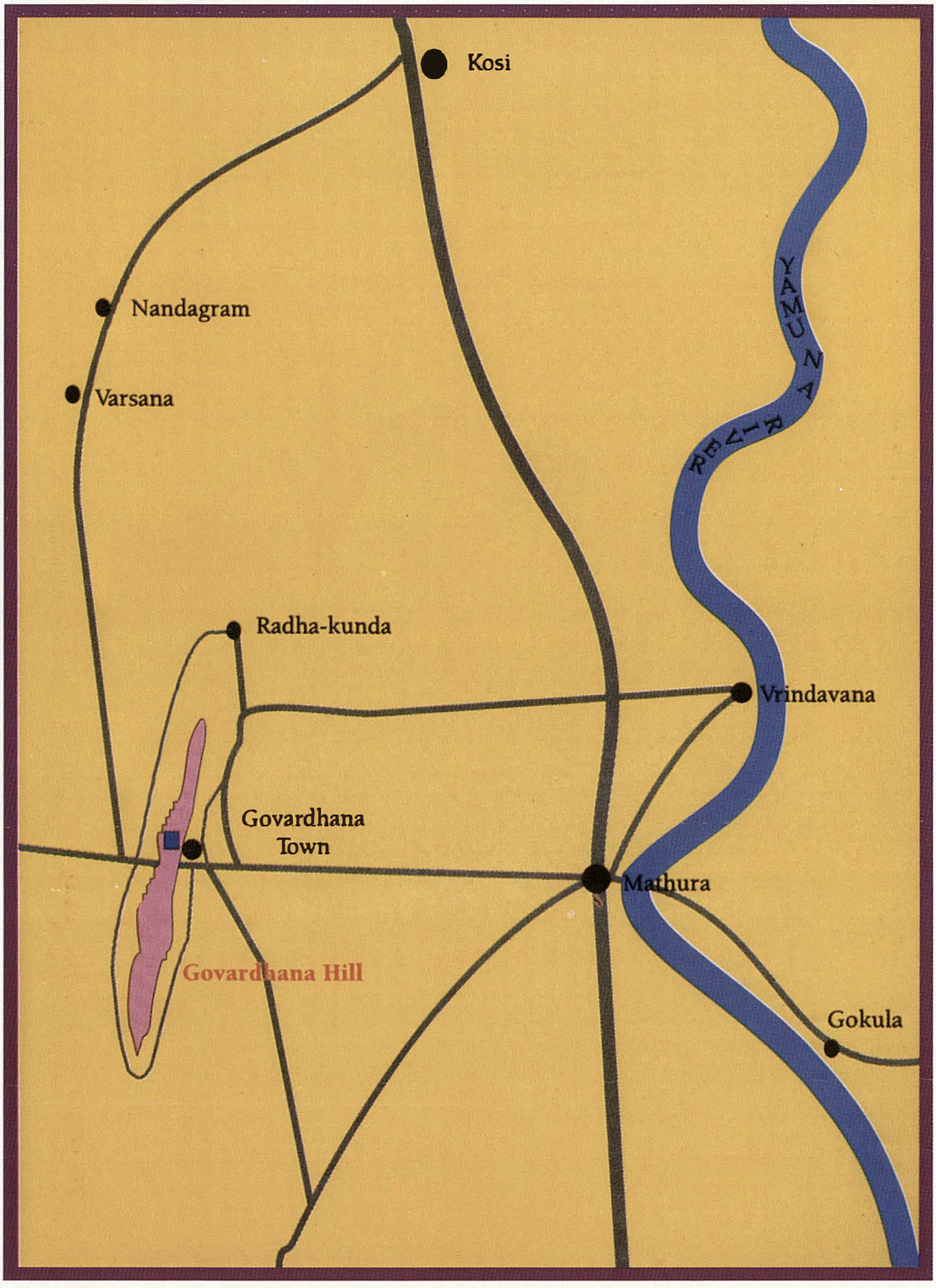
A view of Govardhana Hill near Dāni Raya Temple


Kosi
Nandagram
Varsana
YAMUNA RIVER
Radha-kunda
Vrindavana
Govardhana Town
Mathura
Govardhana Hill
Gokula

INTRODUCTION

After the wonderful response to my first book, *The Color Guide to Vṛndāvana*, I received many requests from devotees all over the world to write another book about the holy land of Vṛndāvana and began to meditate on what would be the best subject for my next book. Since Govardhana Hill and Rādhā-kuṇḍa were very popular with all the devotees, I decided this should be the subject for my next publication.

Scattered around Govardhana Hill are more than sixty important holy *tīrthas* which many devotees have heard about but very few have visited. Over the period of one year I regularly did *parikramā* of Govardhana Hill, taking photographs and researching the historical background and stories attached to these holy places.

As I started to write and build up a large collection of slides, I realized that in order to do full justice to both Govardhana Hill and Rādhā-kuṇḍa, I would have to write a separate book about each of them. Even though Rādhā-kuṇḍa is on the *parikramā* of Govardhana Hill, it alone has over fifty holy places situated around its sacred banks. I decided to first release a book on Govardhana Hill with a capsule on Rādhā-kuṇḍa and then write another book solely about Rādhā-kuṇḍa.

I humbly thank my beloved spiritual master Śrīla Prabhupāda for giving me the opportunity to perform this wonderful service of producing books about the holy land of Vṛndāvana. I have been told that these books have helped many devotees better appreciate the holy *dhāma*, which in turn gives them further inspiration to serve the lotus feet of Śrī-Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.

Your servant
Rājaśekhara dāsa Brahmacārī,
Govardhana Pūja 1997

Peacocks can be found all around Govardhana Hill

The Holy Dhāma of Vṛndāvana

jaya rādhe, jaya kṛṣṇa jaya vṛndāvana
śrī govinda, gopīnātha, madana-mohana
śyāma-kuṇḍa, rādhā-kuṇḍa, giri-govardhana
kalindī jamunā jaya, jaya mahāvana

Śrī Vraja-dhāma-mahimāmṛta

In order to attract the fallen conditioned souls to return to the spiritual world, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, periodically descends to earth and reveals before the world His most attractive transcendental loving pastimes.

When the Lord descends, He brings with Him His own transcendental abode, along with His most confidential friends, servants and associates, who assist Him in performing His innumerable pastimes.

The beautiful place known as Vṛndāvana is a transcendental abode in the spiritual world and is made entirely of divine touchstones. There are many beautiful temples there made out of jewels, and the swans known as rāja-haṁsa play in the waters of the River Yamunā, which flows through that transcendental land. In the water of that divine river there is a beautiful golden lotus of a hundred petels.

In the midst of that lotus there is a golden platform surrounded by eight petals. Situated upon those eight petals are the eight principal sakhīs, headed by Lalitā and Visākhā. On that golden platform the divine couple sit upon a jeweled throne. In the company of Lord Syāma sits the beautiful Rādhikā.

Vasanti-rāsa
Narottama dāsa Thākura

Before Lord Kṛṣṇa's descent 5,000 years ago, He had manifested on the earthly plane His own transcendental abode, known as Gokula Vṛndāvana. This transcendental abode, also known as *dhāma*, is non-different from the Lord's abode in the spiritual world and should never be considered to be a part of this material world.

When Lord Kṛṣṇa's transcendental pastimes on earth have been completed and the Lord returns to the spiritual world, He leaves behind His transcendental abode so that His devotees on earth can go and take shelter there.

Within the holy *dhāma*, which by material calculation has a diameter of 84 kosas equal to 168 miles, are twelve sacred forests where Lord Kṛṣṇa enjoyed many transcendental pastimes. Of these twelve forests, the forest of Vṛndāvana is considered to be not only the most sacred but also the largest. Within it the most intimate and confidential pastimes of divine love took place.

Situated in the middle of this vast forest is the transcendental mountain known as Govardhana Hill. Upon the slopes of this transcendental mountain Lord Kṛṣṇa enjoyed innumerable childhood pastimes surrounded by His most confidential associates — the beautiful milk-maids and cowherd boys of Vṛndāvana.

A view of Govardhana Hill near Dāna-nirvartana-Kuṇḍa

A view from the Narasiṁhadeva Mandira at Apsarā-kuṇḍa of the tree covered Govardhana Hill rising above Apsarā Vana— in the far distance can be seen the Gopāla Rāja Mandir at Aniyora.

The Glories of Govardhana Hill

O Govardhana, O king of mountains,
O hill whose nectarian name—the best of Hari's servants—
flows from the moonlike mouth of Śrī Rādhā,
O hill that the Vedas declare to be the tilaka marking of Vraja, please
grant me a residence near to you.

Stavāvali
Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmi

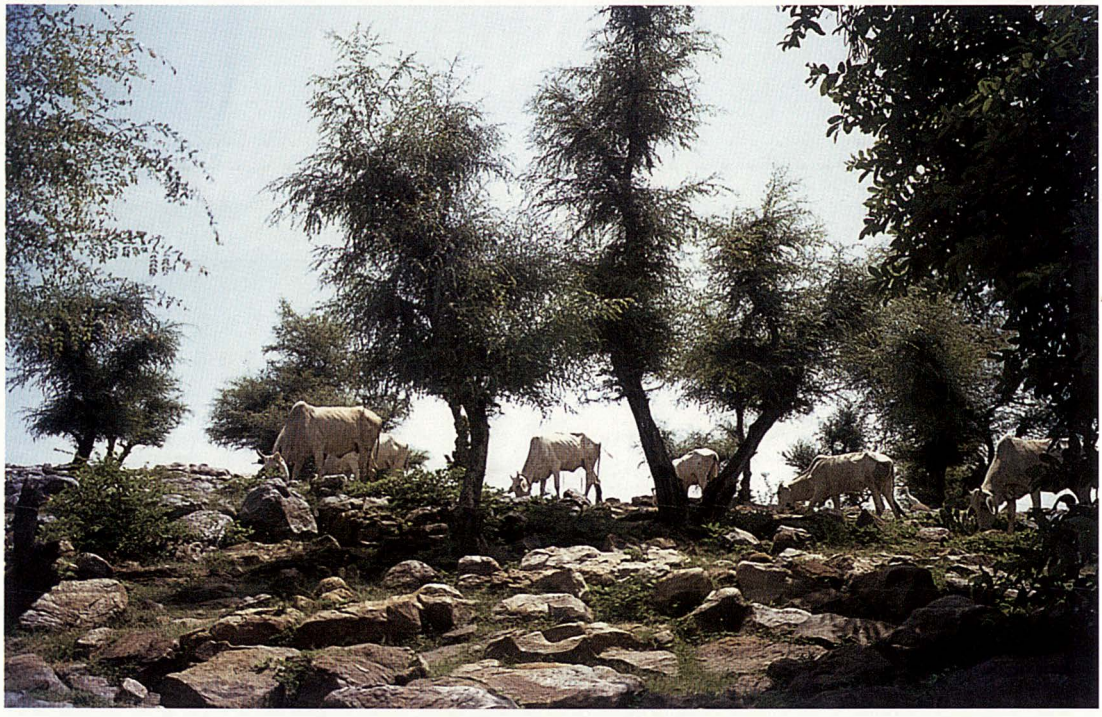
Govardhana Hill is acknowledged throughout the Vedic scripture's as the most sacred mountain not only in the whole of India, but in all the three worlds. It is therefore no wonder that when Govardhana Hill appeared, all the great mountains of the universe came and worshiped him as their king. They also declared that Govardhana had descended from Goloka Vṛndāvana in the spiritual world and is the crown jewel of Vraja.

The Vedas also inform us that Govardhana Hill is understood in two different ways. First, as the greatest devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa, and second as being non-different from Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself.

Before the beautiful *gopis* of Vṛndāvana, Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī praised Govardhana Hill as the very best servant (Haridāsa-varya) of Lord Kṛṣṇa in the following words:

> ***Of all the devotees, this Govardhana Hill is the best! O my friends, this hill supplies Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, along with their calves, cows and cowherd friends, with all kinds of necessities– water for drinking, very soft grass, caves, fruits, flowers and vegetables. In this way the hill offers respects to the Lord. Being touched by the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, Govardhana Hill appears very jubilant.***
>
> *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 10.21.18

As the best servant, Govardhana Hill provides Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma and the inhabitants of Vṛndāvana with all the necessities of life. Cool fragrant drinking water from its many waterfalls, pure honey, mango juice and pīlu juice, wonderful varieties of, herbs, roots, fruits, creepers and fresh flowers. Govardhana also provides various minerals and precious gems that the cowherd boys use to decorate Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma and themselves as well.



Cow grazing on Govarhdhana Hill

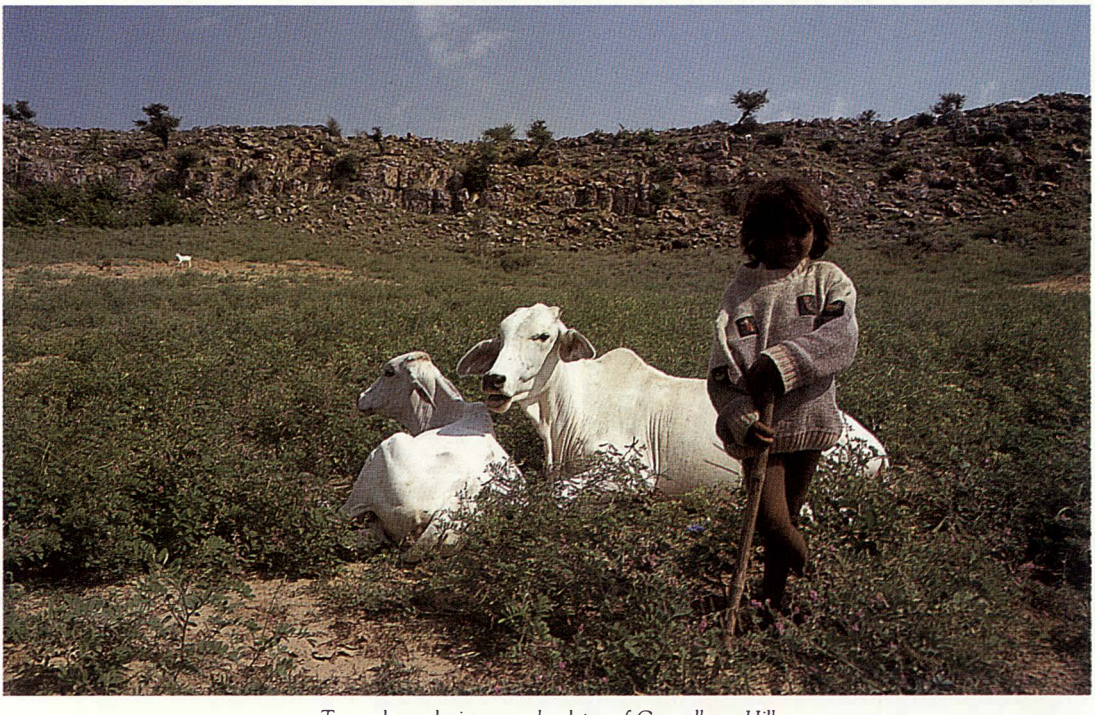
This sacred hill also provides deep caves where Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma rest and take shelter against the rain and the scorching sun. Kṛṣṇa also enjoys many intimate loving pastimes with Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī in these same caves.

Govardhana Hill also provides a special kind of soft, fragrant grass that makes the cows strong and healthy. This grass also helps increase the cow's milk production, which is used to make pure ghee for the sacrificial fire and cooking. The milk is also turned into butter, yogurt, cheese and an amazing variety of milksweets.

Considering that milk is the economic backbone of the inhabitants of Vṛndāvana, it is no wonder that Lord Kṛṣṇa advised the Vrajavasīs to stop the sacrifice to Lord Indra and worship Govardhana Hill instead.

Govardhana Hill also provides Lord Kṛṣṇa with a stage to perform His innumerable transcendental loving pastimes with the beautiful damsels of Vraja and with His many cowherd boyfriends.

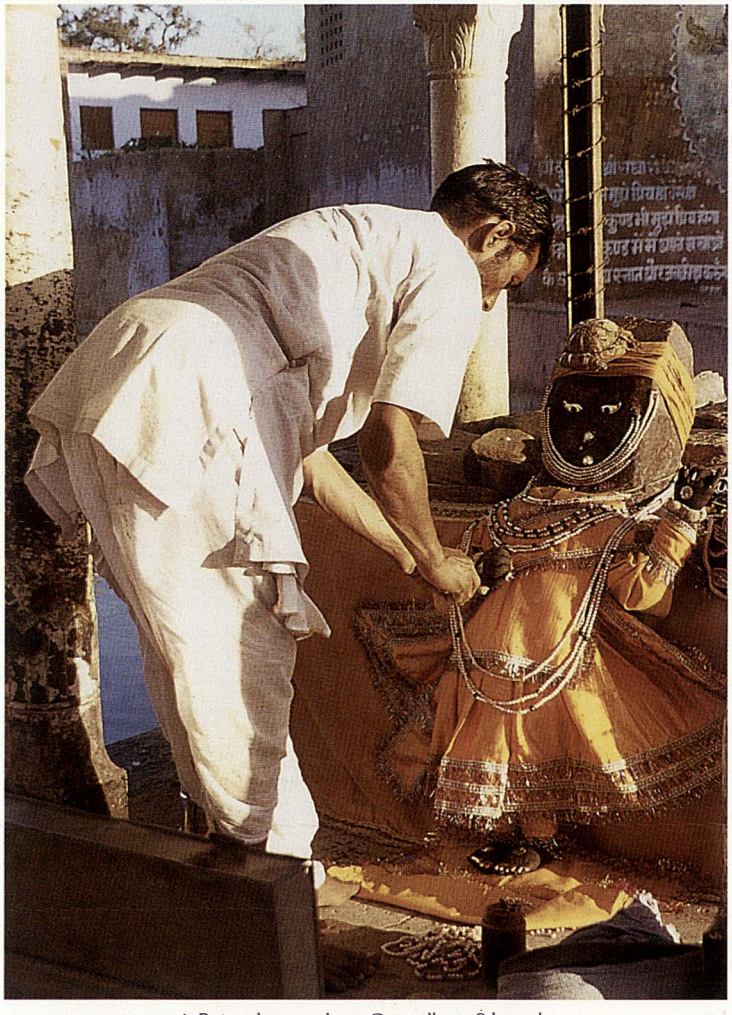
Saras Crane near Govardhana



Two calves relaxing near the slopes of Govardhana Hill

The Vedas also say that Govardhana Hill is non-different from the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself. When Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu visited Vraja in the year 1515, He refused to climb Govardhana Hill because He saw that Govardhana was non-different from Lord Kṛṣṇa. At the time of the *annakūṭa* ceremony, Kṛṣṇa declared that He was non-different from Govardhana Hill:

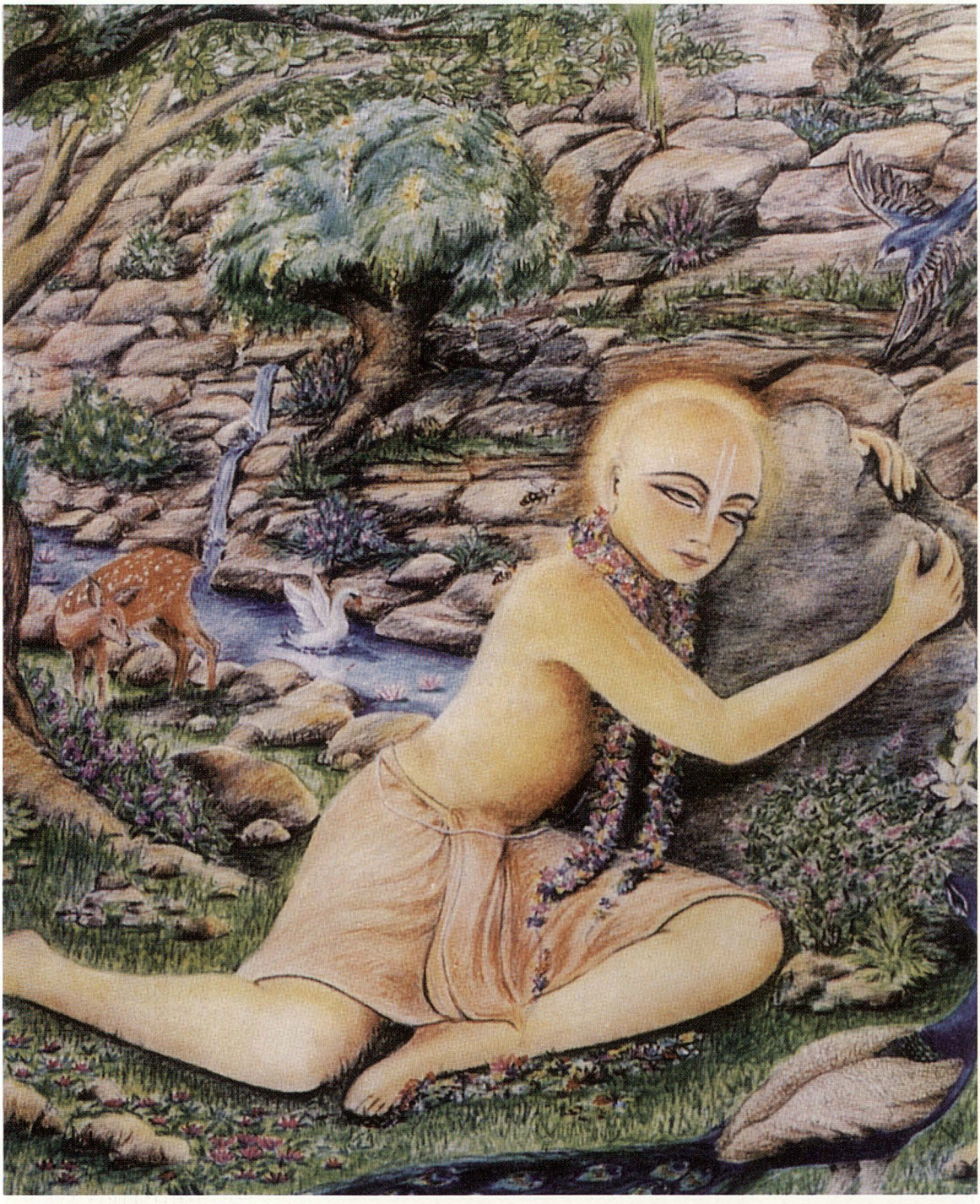
> ***Kṛṣṇa then assumed an unprecedented huge form to instil faith in the cowherd men declaring, 'I am Govardhana Mountain!' He ate the abundant offerings. Together with the people of Vraja, the Lord bowed down to Govardhana Hill, thus in effect offering obeisances to Himself. Then He said, " Just see how this hill has appeared in person and bestowed mercy upon us!***
>
> *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.24.35-6*



A Pūjārī dresses a large Govardhana Śilā at the Sangam shrine on the banks of Rādhā-kuṇḍa

Because Govardhana Hill is non-different from Kṛṣṇa Himself, the rocks from Govardhana are worshipable just like a Deity of Kṛṣṇa. In fact, the stones known as Govardhana-*śīlās* do not need to be installed as they are already considered to be worshipable Deities. Many great devotees have worshiped these *śīlās* from Govardhana: Sanātana Gosvāmī, Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī, and Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu Himself.

Govardhana Hill should be envisioned to be in the shape of a peacock resting with its head tucked into its side. Its face is considered to be Kuṣuma-sarovara, its neck Mānasī-gaṅgā, its mouth Mukharavinda, its two eyes Rādhā-kuṇḍa and Śyāma-kuṇḍa, the beginning of its tail Balarāma Sthali and the end Punchari-kuṇḍa (Naval-kuṇḍa).



A painting of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu embracing a rock of Govardhana Hill

The Appearance of Govardhana Hill

Lord Kṛṣṇa's father Nanda Mahārāja once inquired from his brother Upānanda how Govardhana Hill had appeared in the sacred land of Vṛndāvana. Upānanda replied that King Pāṇḍu, father of the Pāṇḍavas, had asked this very question to Grandfather Bhīṣma, who had narrated the following story from the *Garga Saṁhitā*:

One day in Goloka Vṛndāvana, Lord Kṛṣṇa informed Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī that She should now appear on earth as it was time for Them to perform Their transcendental pastimes within the material world. Rādhārāṇī replied that unless Vraja Dhāma, the Yamunā and Govardhana Hill were present there, She would not be very happy. Kṛṣṇa then told Rādhārāṇī that She need not worry, as Vraja Dhāma, along with the Yamunā and Govardhana Hill had already appeared on earth.

Many years before this incident, in the land of Śalmalī-dvīpa, the wife of the great mountain Droṇācal gave birth to a son named Govardhana. At the time of Govardhana's birth all the demigods appeared in the sky and showered flowers upon him. The great mountains, led by the Himalayas and Sumeru came there to offer their respects. They then performed *parikramā* of Govardhana and accepted him as their king. They offered very nice prayers praising Govardhana for having descended from Goloka Vṛndāvana, describing him as the "crown jewel of Vraja."

Some years later, at the beginning of Satya-yuga, the great sage and mystic yogi Pulastya Muni paid a visit to Śalmalī-dvīpa. Upon seeing the beautiful Govardhana Hill covered with many lovely creepers, flowers, rivers, caves and chirping birds, the sage felt that this hill was capable of giving liberation. He then went to meet Droṇācal, who immediately offered his respects and inquired from the sage what service he could render.

Pulastya Muni informed Droṇācal that he was from Kāśī (Benares) and was on pilgrimage to all the holy places. And he said that even though the sacred river Ganges flows through Kāśī, there is no beautiful hill. He then asked Droṇācal to give Govardhana to him so that he could perform his austerities sitting on top of the hill.

On hearing the sage's request, Droṇācal, who was not willing to part with his son, started to shed tears in thought of separation from his beloved Govardhana. Not wanting to see Pulastya Muni become angry and curse his father, Govardhana asked the sage how he would carry him all the way to Kāśī. The sage replied that he would carry him in his right hand. Govardhana then agreed to go with the sage on one condition — that if the sage put him down anywhere during the course of the journey, he would not be able to lift him again. Pulastya Muni agreed and carrying Govardhana in his right hand he left for Kāśī.

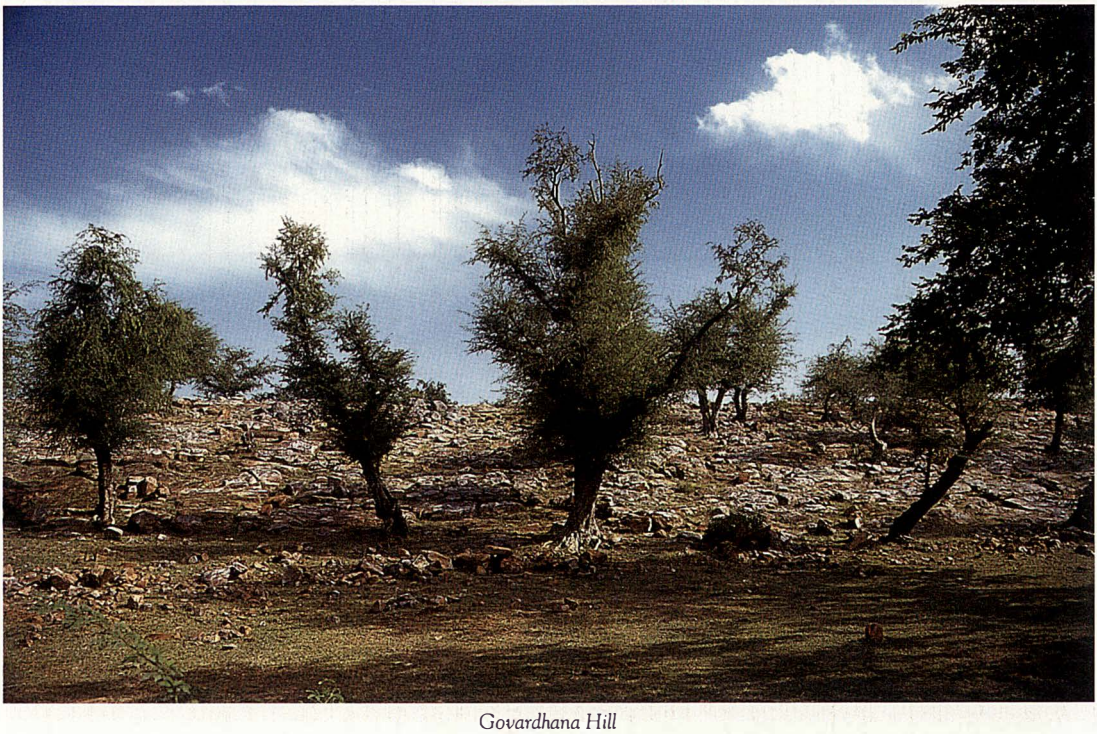
By the will of providence Pulastya Muni passed through Vraja on his way to Kāśī. On arriving in Vraja, Govardhana thought that now he was in Vraja he should remain there in the holy *dhāma.* By his mystic power he was able to influence Pulastya Muni to attend to the call

of nature. Unmindful, the sage put Govardhana down and went off to answer the call but when he returned he was unable to lift Govardhana again. Trying with all his might, using both hands, he could not lift Govardhana even slightly.

Village girls herding goats on Govardhana Hill

Out of frustation Pulastya Muni became angry and cursed Govardhana to sink into the ground by the measurement of one mustard seed every day. When Govardhana first came to Vraja in the beginning of Satya-yuga, he was eight yojanas long (64 miles); five yojanas wide (40 miles) and two yojanas high (16 miles). It is said that after ten thousand years of the Kali-yuga, Govardhana will have completely disappeared.

After narrating the wonderful story of Govardhana's appearance, Sunanda informed Nanda Mahārāja that as long as Govardhana Hill and the river Yamunā remained manifest, Kali-yuga would not take its full effect. Sunanda also said that anyone who is fortunate enough to hear the description of the appearance of Govardhana Hill would be freed from all sins.



Govardhana Hill

GOVARDHANA PARIKRAMĀ

To the West of Mathurā, at a distance of two* yojanas, *is Govardhana, the topmost holy place. Anyone who performs its* parikramā *will never have to take birth in this world again.

Varāha Purāṇa

After having stopped the Indra yajña, Kṛṣṇa advised the inhabitants of Vṛndāvana to worship Govardhana Hill which they did. When the *Annakūṭa* ceremony of offering food to Govardhana was complete and the *Vrajavāsīs* had offered *ārati*, Kṛṣṇa led all of them on *parikramā* around Govardhana Hill. From that time onwards, the sacred *parikramā* of Govardhana Hill has continued and even today it is still being performed by devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

Govardhana Hill has a *parikramā* of about fourteen miles (23 km.) and can take five to six hours to complete if one walks at a brisk pace. People from all over India visit Vraja in order to perform Govardhana *parikramā*. On auspicious occasions like Guru Pūrṇimā, Puruṣottama-masa or Govardhana-pūjā, over half a million people go around the sacred hill.

There is no time limit for performing Govardhana *parikramā*, for those who perform the *daṇḍavata parikramā* it may take weeks and sometimes even months to complete. The *daṇḍavata*

On auspicious occasions entire villages come out to perform Govardhana parikramā

parikramā is performed by standing in one spot, offering obeisances like a stick (*daṇḍa*) by lying flat on the ground. One then places a stone where the fingertips touch the ground in order to mark the spot. Standing up, one moves to the stone marker and again offers obeisances like a stick, again marking the spot where the fingertips touch the ground, thus repeating the same process again and again all the way around Govardhana Hill. Some *sādhus* perform 108 *daṇḍavata parikramā* by offering 108 obeisances in one spot before moving to the next. This can take a number of months to complete and one has to sleep wherever one is and accept alms from pilgrims passing by.

A group of ladies performing parikramā

The six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana regularly performed *parikramā* of Govardhana Hill, especially Sanātana Gosvāmī and Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī who, while staying near Govardhana, would perform *parikramā* every day. Sanātana Gosvāmī used to perform a much longer *parikramā*

A holy man (sadhu) performing 108 daṇḍavata parikramā around Govardhana Hill

On Guru Pūrnimā thousands circumambulate Govardhana Hill

As parents walk children go by cycle-riksha

Every day of the week devotees can be seen performing Govardhana parikramā

covering a distance of twenty four miles and including such places as Candra-sarovara, Śyāma Dhak, Ganthuli-grāma, Sūrya-kuṇḍa, Mukharai and Kilola-kuṇḍa.

Other great personalities who performed Govardhana *parikramā* were Mādhavendra Purī, Advaita Ācārya, Lord Nityānanda, Vallabhācārya, Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura, Śrīnivasa Ācārya, Rāghava Gosvāmī, Viśvanātha Cakravartī and of course Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu who, upon seeing Govardhana Hill for the first time, fell down like a stick and began embracing one of the rocks. On touching the rock from Govardhana the Lord began to shed tears of love and almost became mad due to transcendental ecstasy.

Most ISKCON devotees start *parikramā* of Govardhana from Rādhā-kuṇḍa village, where the Vṛndāvana road meets the *parikramā* path, because it is convenient for returning to Vṛndāvana when the *parikramā* is over. In his book *Mathurā Mahātmya*, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī has recommended starting Govardhana *parikramā* by first bathing in the Mānasī-gaṅgā and then having *darśana* of Lord Harideva, as Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu did when He performed Govardhana *parikramā* when visiting Vṛndāvana in 1515. Rūpa Gosvāmī also says that each footstep taken in Vraja is equal to visiting all other holy places and performing all the Vedic sacrifices.

Śrila Prabhupāda on Parikramā near Govardhana 1972

Instructions for Performing Parikramā

In *Vraja-bhakti-vilāsa* the following instructions are found concerning *parikramā* of Govardhana Hill

1. One should offer proper respect to all the Deities, cows, *brāhmaṇas*, trees, creepers, rocks and *kuṇḍas* one sees.
2. One should not offend any living entity, moving or non-moving otherwise one will lose the benefits of his *parikramā*.
3. While performing *parikramā* one should not wear shoes or leather items and one's cloth should be freshly washed.
4. One must observe *brahmācārya* and take bath as well as clean teeth before starting *parikramā*.
5. One should not perform *parikramā* at night.
6. While performing *parikramā* one should move carefully so as not to kill any living entities on the path.
7. If one becomes sick during *parikramā* one should stop and take rest, *parikramā* should be continued after health is regained.
8. One should not leave his *parikramā* uncompleted.
9. Women should not perform *parikramā* during their menstrual period.
10. One should not strain himself while performing *parikramā*.

Ten Offences to be Avoided in the Holy Dhāma

1. To have contempt or disrespect towards the guru who is the revealer of the holy *dhāma*.
2. To think that the holy *dhāma* is temporary.
3. To commit violence towards any of the residents of the holy *dhāma*, or to any of the pilgrims who come there, or to think that they are ordinary mundane people.
4. To perform mundane activities while living in the holy *dhāma*.
5. Earning money by and making a business of *Deity* worship and chanting the holy name.
6. To think that the holy *dhāma* belongs to some mundane country or providence such as Bengal, or to think that the *dhāma* of the Lord is equal to a holy place connected with some demigod, or to attempt to measure the area of the *dhāma*.
7. To commit sinful acts while in the *dhāma*.
8. To consider Vṛndāvana and Navadvīpa different.
9. To blaspheme the *śāstras* which glorify the holy *dhāma*.
10. To be faithless and to think that the glories of the *dhāma* are imaginary.

In the sacred land of Vṛndāvana, the results of all devotional activities performed here are magnified one thousand times. Therefore, one can make rapid advancement if one lives offencelessly in the holy *dhāma*. If however, one does commit offences, they are also magnified one thousand times; therefore, one is advised to carefully avoid committing any offences in the holy *dhāma* of Vṛndāvana.

Rocks on Govardhana Hill

Places of Interest

Kuṣuma-sarovara—the beautiful face of Govardhana

1. *Kuṣuma-sarovara*

Set against a backdrop of exotic palatial buildings, the calm and tranquil lake known as Kuṣuma-sarovara is one of the most fascinating sights in the whole of Vraja. This breathtakingly beautiful monument, an architectural wonder in sandstone, is dedicated to the transcendental loving pastimes of Śrī-Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa that were enacted here on the banks of this lake.

The building itself was erected around 1764 by the king of Bharatpura, Mahārāja Jawahir Singh, as a tribute to his great father, Rāja Surāj Mall, one of the most famous Jat warriors in Indian history, whose ashes are buried in the main building. Within this impressive main building the replica of Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet can be seen in the center of the floor. On the ceiling are beautiful paintings of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes as well as the exploits of Surāj Mall. The other two structures on each side of the main building contain the ashes of Surāj Mall's two queens as well as the replica of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī's lotus feet. The ceiling of these two buildings are also painted with various scenes from Lord Kṛṣṇa's pastimes. There is also a temple of Girirāja, whose elderly *pūjārī* is always happy to show devotees around.

This enchanting lake, Kuṣuma-sarovara, has been here since ancient times and is also known as Sumanaḥ-sarovara. According to the *Brahma-vaivarta Purāṇa*, the great sage Aṣṭavakra Muni did penance on its banks while waiting for the appearance on earth of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. It is said that whilst having Their sacred *darśana*, Aṣṭavakra Muni gave up his mortal coil. On the western bank of the lake, a small shrine dedicated to Lord Śiva is believed to be the actual place where Aṣṭavakra entered into *samādhi*.

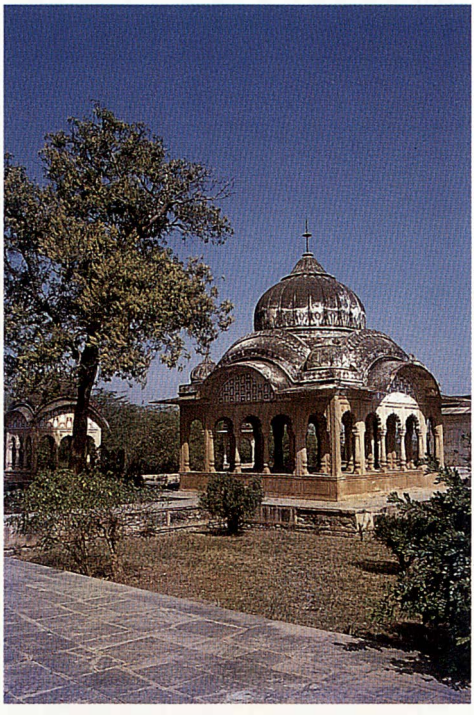
At the time of His pilgrimage to Vṛndāvana, Lord Caitanya also came to Kuṣuma-

Kuṣuma-sarovara — an architectural wonder in sandstone

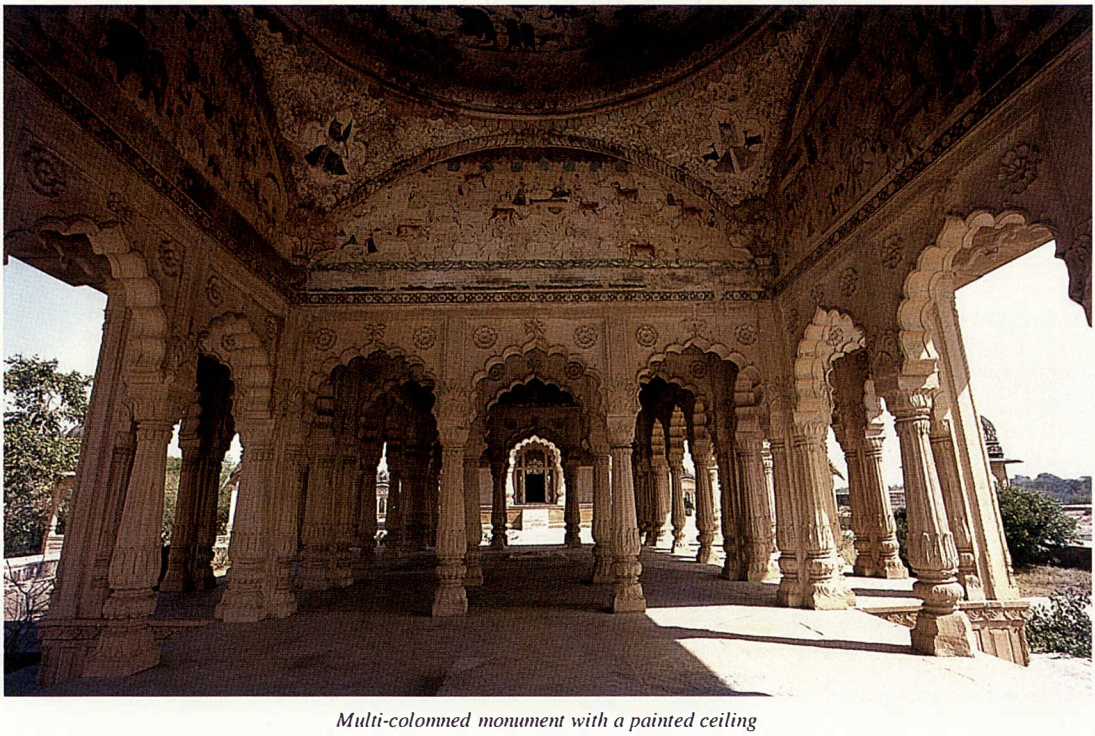
sarovara and bathed in its cooling waters. *Kuṣuma* means flowers and *sarovara* means lake. Formerly surrounding this lake was a beautiful forest known as Puṣpa Vana (forest of flowers), and within this forest Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī and Her girlfriends used to pick flowers.

Once when Rādhārāṇī and Her girlfriends were picking flowers, Kṛṣṇa suddenly appeared on the scene and started joking with Rādhārāṇī. Their conversation went as follows :

Kṛṣṇa : "Who is picking flowers?"
Rādhā : "No one but Me."
Kṛṣṇa : "Who are You?"
Rādhā : "Don't you know Me?"
Kṛṣṇa : "If I knew You I wouldn't ask."
Rādhā : "I don't care if You don't know Me, why don't You leave this place?"
Kṛṣṇa : "I am the gardener, where will I go?"
Rādhā : "If You are a male bee, then go to the female bee."
Kṛṣṇa : "You are the female bee."



One of the monuments at Kuṣuma-sarovara



Multi-colomned monument with a painted ceiling

Rādhā : "You appear to be an honest man and an ascetic, yes You know the art of stealing a youth's heart. Aren't You ashamed of Yourself?"

Kṛṣṇa : "My dear lady, Mahārāja Kandarpa (Cupid) is the king of this forest; because he is pleased with Me, he has delegated to Me all the power. If You are so proud I will confiscate all Your flowers.

"O pretty lady, I am a *brahmacārī* and an ascetic. It appears to Me that You have come here simply to try and entice Me with Your beauty. But do not think I am alone here in the jungle. My *sakhās* (friends) are always close by. Please don't play any tricks with Me, and just behave like an honest person.

"Anyway Your bodily actions speak louder than any words. You are trying to capture the Mahārāja's property; every limb of Your body is just like a thief. Don't think that just because You are a lady You will be pardoned. I would be committing a great wrong if I pardoned You. When I take You before the Mahārāja, You will be sentenced with various punishments. At that time Your vanity will vanish. Without permission You have picked flowers, and I have no authority to pardon You.

"You are thinking that this is just an ordinary forest and the king is not very powerful because his kingdom is so small, but You will see, because you have robbed this kingdom You will be punished. With the different parts of Your body You have stolen different things; the palms of Your hands and the soles of Your feet have stolen the beauty of the petals of the lotus flowers; Your gait – the baby elephants and swans; Your nails – the mirrors; Your knees – golden

Exotic palatial buildings at Kuṣuma-sarovara

balls; Your hips – the golden banana trees; the upper part of Your waist – the golden altar; Your navel – the lake of nectar; Your chest – the bed of Cupid; Your fingers – the flowers of Cupid, which is the source of his power; Your teeth – have stolen the pearl necklace and Your eyes – the deer and the Cakori bird; the lines on Your neck – the couch; and the lines on Your stomach – the gentle waves of the Yamunā; You have stolen so many things, how can the king pardon You? The beauty of our kingdom is unique in all the world. Today You have robbed everything, including our prestige."

Rādhā: "O Kṛṣṇa, You are very clever. You are the greatest thief; now You are acting like a saint and calling others thieves. What can be said of You? When You stole the clothes of the *gopīs*, Your character was apparent. Those poor naked *gopīs* were standing before You with folded hands and You were simply enjoying the fun. There is no better example of Your honesty.

"O Kṛṣṇa, there are many girls of marriageable age and You are a young prince, but nobody is willing to give his daughters to You. There must be a good reason. It is highly probable that You are not a normal man, and no girl will like to marry an abnormal man.

"My dear Kṛṣṇa, I fully understand that it is not out of choice but out of force that You have become a *rahmacārī*. O Kṛṣṇa, You are in the habit of playing Your flute, which has the power of attracting all the young girls. Shameful! How dare You call Yourself a *brahmacārī*. In fact it is very wicked and sinful to call Yourself a *rahmacārī* and then tempt young girls. Now don't come one step closer to Me, please! It is surprising, considering that You have not planted a single tree in this whole forest, that You can claim ownership. The entire forest has been

Kuṣuma-sarovara, a medieval architectural masterpiece

Sunset at Kuṣuma-sarovara

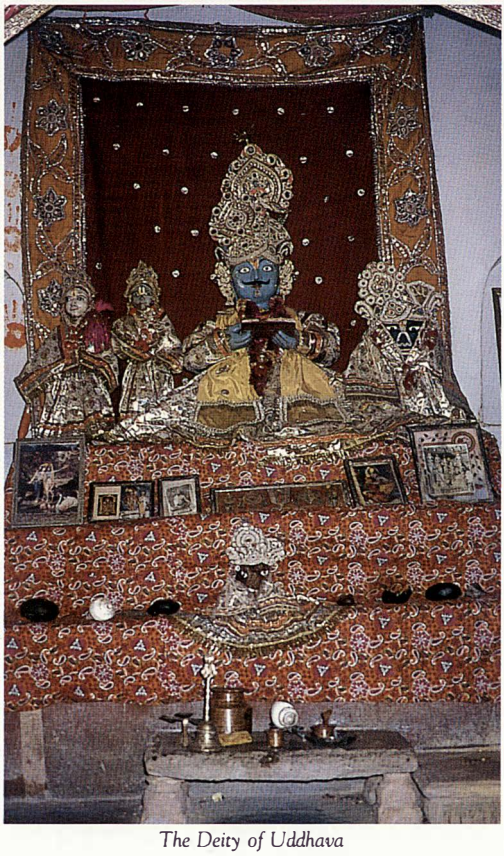
destroyed by Your cows trampling here and there. Our sakhī Vṛndā Devī has taken great pains to keep this forest clean and tidy. Therefore we call it Vṛndāvana, and She presented it to Me as a gift. This forest has grown around the banks of Rādhā-kuṇḍa and it is My playground. There is a sign on the path, which says "Ladies only."

"We are simply picking flowers to worship the Sun god. Who are You to stop us? This place belongs to us. O *brahmacārī*, males are strictly prohibited. How dare You set foot here! Off You go with your cowherd friends and look after the cows."

Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī then threatened Kṛṣṇa that She would call Lalitā, who She said was very powerful. At that moment, Viśākhā sakhī intervened in the lovers' quarrel and, catching hold of the corner of Rādhārāṇī's cloth, tied it to Kṛṣṇa's. She then informed the Divine Couple that it was now time for Them to move on to Rādhā-kuṇḍa.

The Divine Couple performed many nectarian pastimes at Kuṣuma-sarovara, and it is said that anyone who bathes in the sanctified waters of this lake becomes eligible to witness the ambrosial eightfold pastimes (*aṣṭa-kaliyā-līlā*) of Śrī Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.

Formerly Govardhana Hill could be seen behind Kuṣuma-sarovara and it used to stretch all the way to Rādhā-kuṇḍa, but because of its gradual sinking into the ground it can no longer be seen in this area.



The Deity of Uddhava

2. Uddhava Baithaka (Sitting Place)

In this temple situated next to Kuṣuma-sarovara is the Deity of Uddhava, Kṛṣṇa's very dear friend and cousin, whose bodily features resembled Kṛṣṇa's almost exactly. The Deity was installed here five thousand years ago by Vajranābha, Lord Kṛṣṇa's great grandson. It is said that Uddhava resides in three places: Badrikāśrama, Dvārakā, and on the banks of Kuṣuma-sarovara. At this place, in the forest of flowers, Uddhava is living in the form of creepers known as gulma lata, praying that one day the lotus feet of the *gopīs* will trample on his head.

When Uddhava came to Vṛndāvana as a messenger of Kṛṣṇa, he was so moved by the pure unalloyed devotion of the *gopīs* that he wanted to smear the dust of their feet on his head. [But he knew they would never allow him to do that.] Not wishing to disturb the mood of the *gopīs*, Uddhava desired to become just an insignificant clump of grass in the land of Vṛndāvana. In this way, as the *gopīs* passed by, the dust from their feet would automatically touch his head and bless him without their knowledge.

Kṛṣṇa decorating Rādhārānī in Aśoka Vana, from one of the paintings at Kuṣuma-sarovara

3. Aśoka Vana

Just near the banks of Kuṣuma-sarovara is a forest grove of aśoka trees where Śrī Kṛṣṇa braided Rādhārāṇi's hair and decorated Her with cosmetics and jewelry. This pastime has been described by Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja in the *Govinda-lilāmṛta*. A small temple marks the spot where the pastime took place.

4. Nārada Vana

At this place is a beautiful *kuṇḍa* and a temple containing the Deity of Nārada Muni. Formerly there used to be a forest here where Nārada Muni performed *tapasya*. Nārada had approached Lord Śiva for the purpose of obtaining a boon whereby he could have *darśana* of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's pastimes of conjugal love. After receiving a mantra from Lord Śiva, Nārada came here to meditate on it and perform *tapasya*. Vṛndā Devī happened to come there with her assistants and upon seeing her, Nārada offered his obeisances and asked if he could witness the conjugal pastimes of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.

The Deity of Nārada Muni

The tranquil Naradā-kuṇḍa

Vṛndā Devī informed Nārada that it would not be possible in his present male form. She then took him to Kuṣuma-sarovara. After bathing there he obtained the form of a *gopī*. Vṛndā Devī then took Nārada to Rādhā-kuṇḍa, where he was able to have *darśana* of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa's *aṣṭa-kāliyā* pastimes.

Seeing Nārada there in the form of a *gopī*, Kṛṣṇa requested him to stay at Nārada Vana and write *bhakti śā tra* (devotional literatures) for the benefit of humanity. Although Nārada had been cursed by Dakṣa not to be able to stay in one place, Kṛṣṇa informed Nārada that because Vṛndāvana Dhāma is not a part of the material world, the curse of Dakṣa would not apply here.

After this, Vṛndā Devī took Nārada back to Kuṣuma-sarovara. After taking bath Nārada changed back to his male form and returned to this place, where he compiled the famous treatise on devotional service known as the *Nārada-bhakti-sūtras*.

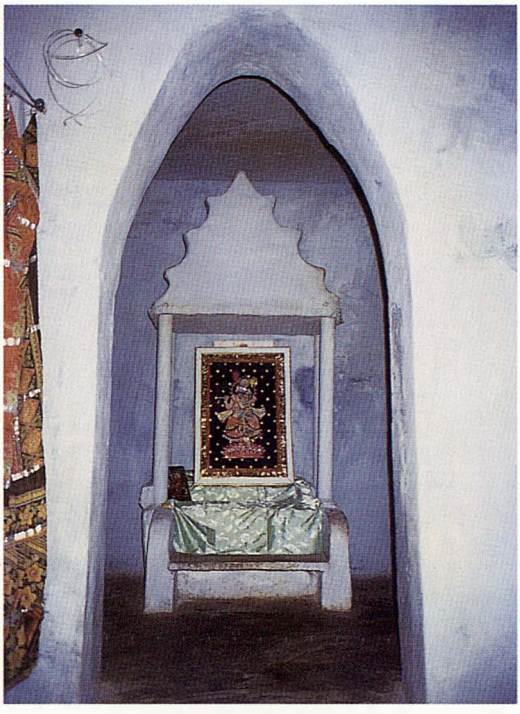
5. Śyāma Kuṭira

Situated in the forest of Śyāma Vana (black forest) is a very beautiful place known as Śyāma Kuṭira. This area is also known as Ratna-siṁhāsana because there used to be a fabulous throne here, made entirely from precious gemstones like diamonds, rubies and sapphires. Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, the queen of Vraja, used to sit on this Ratna-siṁhāsana, surrounded by thousands of Her girlfriends.

Śyāma Kuṭira also marks the spot where Govardhana Hill first starts to appear above the ground. There is also a small *kuṇḍa* known as Ratna-kuṇḍa, and a circular platform which

Ratna-kuṇḍa

Rāsa-sthali



Ratna-siṁhāsana

commemorates the *rāsa* dance that took place here. Upon request, the *pūjārīs* will gladly show the actual site where the Ratna-siṁhāsana, which is now enclosed within a building, formerly stood.

Śyāma Kuṭira is also the site where the fearful Śaṅkhacūḍa demon carried off the *gopīs* while they were enjoying pastimes with Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma. It is said that one beautiful full moon night, both Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma entered the forest along with the *gopīs* and began to enjoy various transcendental pastimes. All the young damsel of Vraja had smeared their bodies with sandalwood paste, and fragrant flowers decorated their hair. A cool breeze, which carried the exotic aroma of *mallikā* flowers, gently blew through the forest.

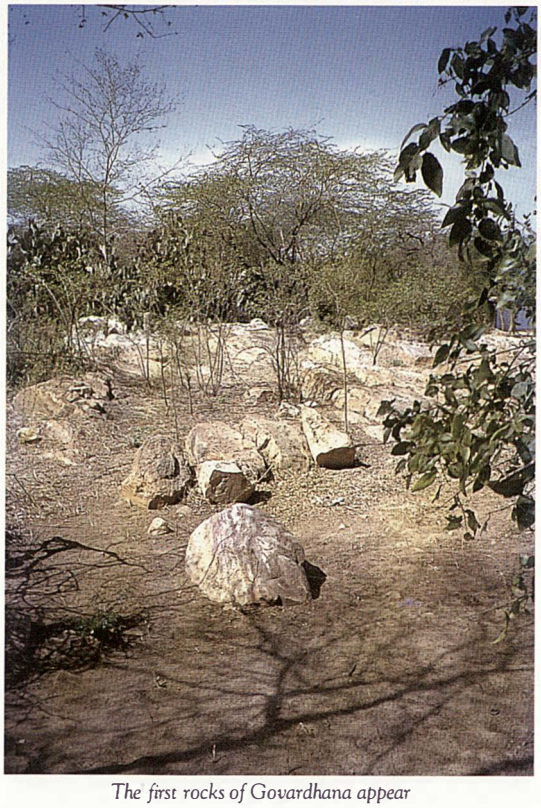
Taking advantage of the pleasant atmosphere, Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma both began to sing in melodious voices. Enchanted by the rhythmical songs that Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma were singing, the *gopīs* almost forgot themselves. Their hair loosened, their dresses slackened and their garlands fell to the ground. At that moment, while the *gopīs* were so absorbed in enjoying the association of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, a terrible demon suddenly appeared. This demon kept a very valuable jewel shaped like a conchshell (*śaṅkha*) on his head. For this reason he was known as Śaṅkhacūḍa and being a friend of Kuvera, the treasurer of the demigods, was very rich and powerfull. Due to his opulence he was arrogant and puffed up with false prestige. He thought that Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma were two ordinary cowherd boys who were enjoying the company of so many beautiful young girls.

Because he belonged to the wealthy community of Kuvera, Śaṅkhacūḍa was thinking — as do all persons who possess great wealth — that all the beautiful women in the world should be

enjoyed by him. Śaṅkhacūḍa began to think that he, not Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, should be enjoying the company of so many beautiful girls.

Śaṅkhacūḍa then decided to commandeer all the beautiful *gopīs*. Coming before them even in the presence of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, he ordered them as if they were his property and began to lead them away to the north. The *gopīs* started to cry out in pitiable voices for Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma to save them.

The two transcendental brothers then picked up huge logs to be used as weapons and, calling out to the *gopīs* not to be afraid, began to chase after Śaṅkhacūḍa. Seeing the two powerful brothers coming to catch him, Śaṅkhacūḍa decided that They were far too strong for him to deal with. Leaving the *gopīs* behind, Śaṅkhacūḍa fled in fear of his life.



The first rocks of Govardhana appear

Kṛṣṇa's foot print

Kṛṣṇa put Balarāma in charge of protecting the *gopīs* and started after the demon. Kṛṣṇa wanted to take the valuable conch-shaped jewel from Śaṅkhacūḍa's head. After chasing Śaṅkhacūḍa for some distance, Kṛṣṇa finally caught him and beat him so hard on the head with His fist that the demon died on the spot. Kṛṣṇa then removed the jewel from Śaṅkhacūḍa's head and returned to where the *gopīs* were waiting. In front of all the beautiful damsels of Vraja, Kṛṣṇa presented the jewel to His elder brother Balarāma, much to the pleasure of everyone.

5A. Kṛṣṇa's Foot-print

To the right of the gate before one enters Śyāma-kuṭira is said to be the impression of Lord Kṛṣṇa's foot-print and that of a calf on a rock from Govardhana Hill.

6. Gvāl Pokharā

Rocks of Govardhana gradually appearing near Gvāl Pokharā

This is one of the many places around Govardhana Hill where Kṛṣṇa and His cowherd boyfriends would sit down and take their lunch together. *Gvāl* means *go-wālā* or cowherd boy, *pokharā* means pool or *kuṇḍa*. This small *kuṇḍa* is also known as Gopāla-kuṇḍa. After an early lunch at Gvāl Pokharā, Kṛṣṇa would manage to slip away from the company of the cowherd boys and head off to Rādhā-kuṇḍa where He would meet with Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī and the *gopīs*.

In the dense jungle behind Gvāl Pokharā, one can see where Govardhana Hill actually begins to emerge from the ground. From this point onwards Govardhana Hill gradually begins to rise until it reaches its highest point just before the village of Aniyor. From there Govardhana gradually descends again untill it finally disappears under the ground just before Apsarā Kuṇḍa. It is said that Gvāl Pokharā forms the ears of Giri-Govardhana.

Gvāl Pokharā—where Kṛṣṇa takes lunch with His cowherd boyfriends

Pelicans near Govardhana Hill

Govardhana Hill gradually rises above the ground

Govardhana Hill near Jugal-kuṇḍa

Parrots preening each other

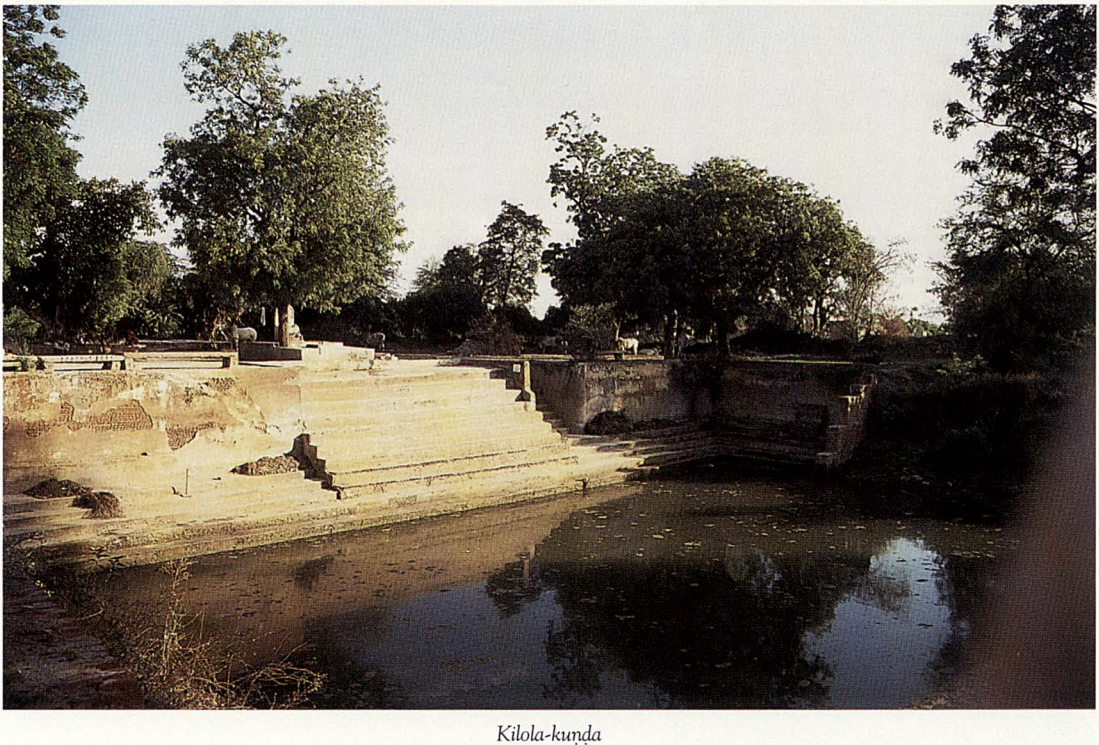
7. JUGAL-KUṆḌA

This ancient *kuṇḍa* is situated in the middle of the fields about twenty-five yards away from the road just before the toll gate. It was at this place where Kṛṣṇa's father Nanda Mahārāja and the cowherd men stayed for a few days on their way from the village of Gokula to their new home at Nandagram.

8. KILOLA-KUṆḌA (KELANVANA)

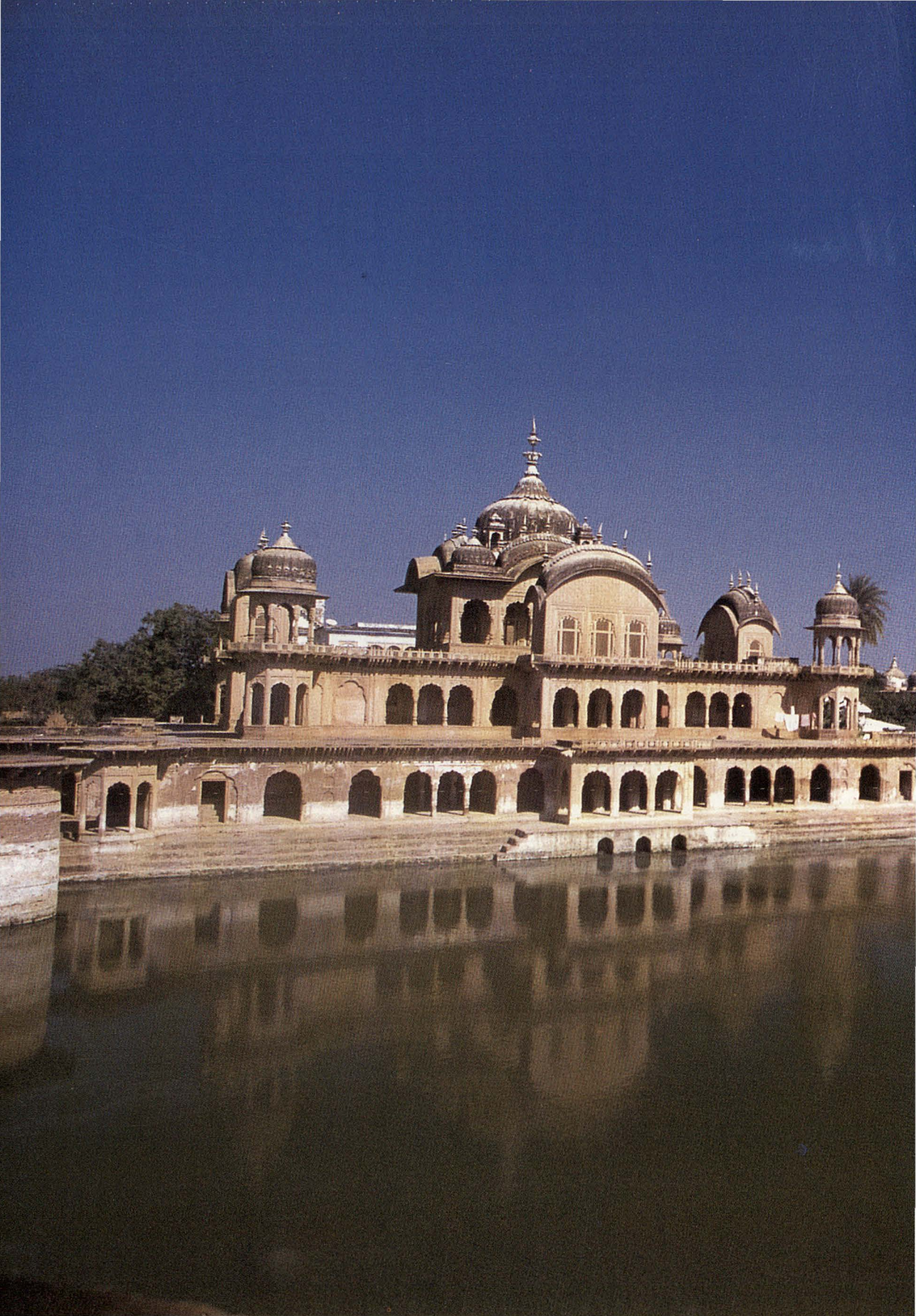
This is the beautiful Kilola-kuṇḍa where Kṛṣṇa would enjoy water sports and other pastimes with Rādhārāṇī and the *gopīs*. In this forest known as Kelanvana, that surrounds the *kuṇḍa*, Kṛṣṇa would play ball games with His cowherd boyfriends. This *kuṇḍa* is situated a short distance from the main *parikramā* path. There is a small temple here as well as a *go-sālā*. It is one of the places on the twenty-four-mile *parikramā* route that was followed by Sanātana Gosvāmī. Nanda Mahārāja and the cowherd men stayed at this place for a few days.

Jugal-kuṇḍa



Kilola-kuṇḍa

In some places Govardhana Hill lies just above the ground



Pañcha Tirtha-kuṇḍa

The beautiful palace at Pañcha-tīrtha-kuṇḍa

9. Pañca-tīrtha-kuṇḍa

Just as one enters the town of Govardhana, on the right side of the road, is a beautiful palace built by the kings of Bhāratapura. At the side of this palace is the Pañca-tīrtha-kuṇḍa, which contains the water of five (*pañca*) holy rivers : Narmadā, Gomatī, Sarayū, Kanchī and Vetrī. Although it is generally not open to the public, ISKCON sometimes holds its annual boat festival here.

10. Mānasī-gaṅgā

Mānasī-gaṅgā intensely enjoys the pleasurable taste
of the boating pastimes of Gāndharvikā and Mura-vimardana.
With her plentiful waves she pushes about piles of effulgent
rocks from Govardhana Hill. May this lake give me protection.

Vraja-vilās-stava 64

Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī

The beautiful celestial lake known as Mānasī-gaṅgā is the largest of all the sacred *kuṇḍas* found in the Vraja area. Situated right in the heart of Govardhana town, this lake was formerly much larger than it is today. Just as Govardhana Hill is shrinking in size every day, so is Mānasī-gaṅgā.

Mānasī-gaṅgā is considered to be nondifferent from the river Ganges. In fact, it is considered to be even better. One who bathes in the river Ganges is purified of all his sins, but one who

bathes in Mānasī-gaṅgā is not only purified of his sins but will also achieve *prema- bhakti*, the highest platform of loving devotion to Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

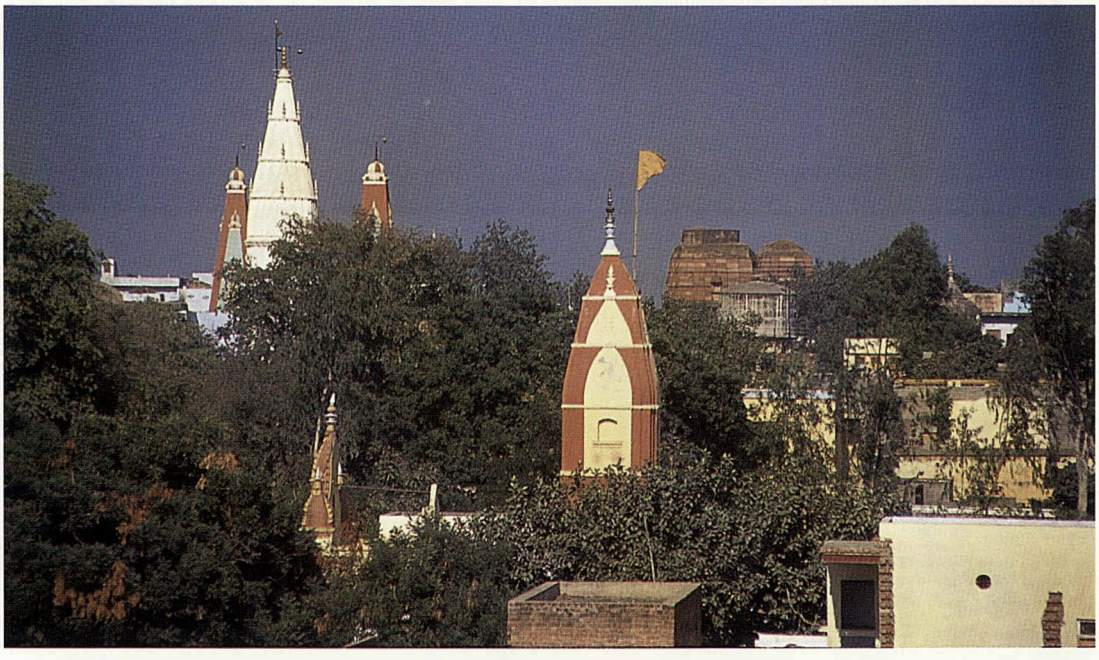
At the present time Govardhana Hill is estmated to be about seven miles long and situated right in the middle is Mānasī-gaṅgā, which is considered to be the beautiful neck of Giri-Govardhana.

The Appearance of Mānasī-gaṅgā

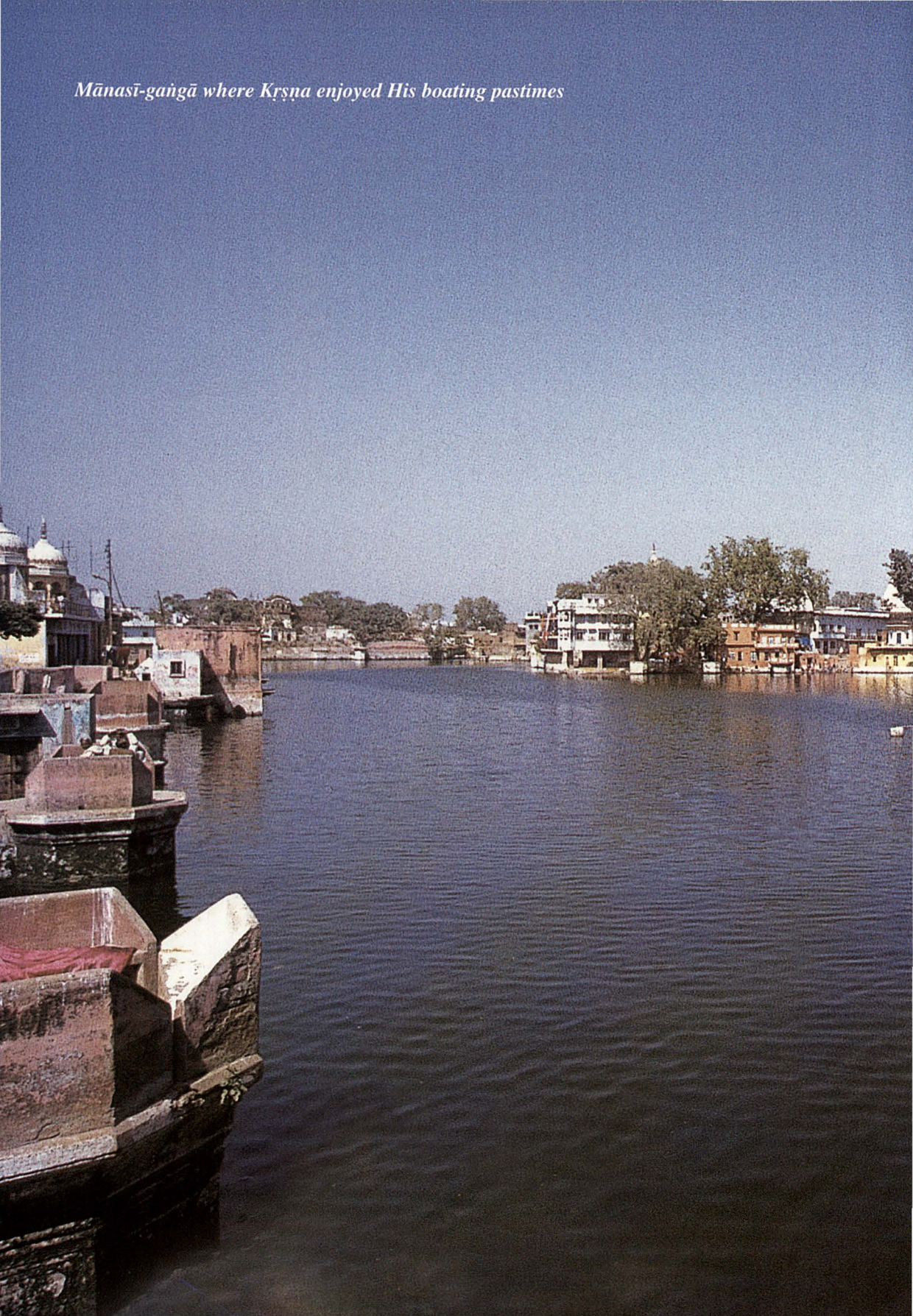
One day Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, along with Their cowherd boyfriends, were tending the cows in the pasture grounds near Govardhana Hill. A demon of the name Vatsāsura came there in the disguised form of a calf and with the evil intention of killing Kṛṣṇa, mingled with the other calves.

Kṛṣṇa however, was aware that this demon was hiding amongst the calves, and He warned Balarāma. The transcendental brothers then sneaked up behind the demon calf and Kṛṣṇa grabbed him by his back legs, whipped him around with great force and threw him up into a nearby tree. The demon immediately gave up his life air and his dead body fell to the ground. On seeing this the cowherd boys enthusiastically congratulated Kṛṣṇa.

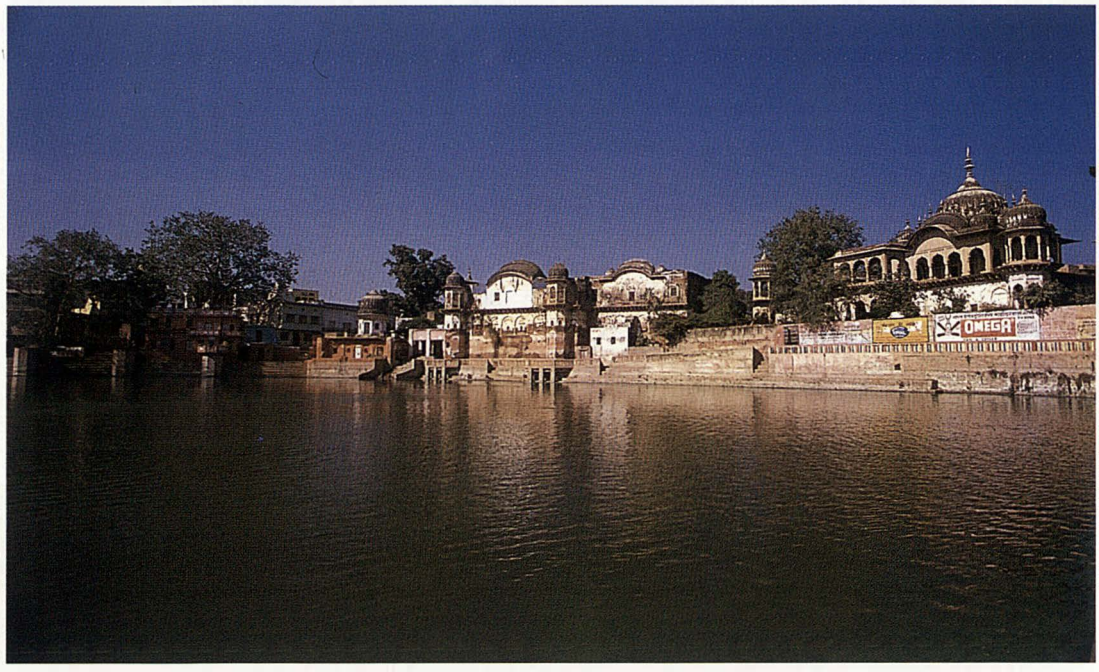
Because Kṛṣṇa had killed a demon in the shape of a calf, the cowherd boys asked Him to take His bath in the river Ganges in order to purify Himself. Not wanting to leave Vraja, Kṛṣṇa informed the cowherd boys that He would call the river Ganges to appear in Vraja. Kṛṣṇa then meditated and from within His mind the river Ganges manifested before Him in the form of Mānasī-gaṅgā. (*Mānasa* means mind). In other words, the Gaṅgā manifested from the mind of Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa then took his bath to the great delight of all the cowherd boys.



The holy town of Govardhana



Mānasī-gaṅgā where Kṛṣṇa enjoyed His boating pastimes



Some of the palaces on the banks of Mānasi-gaṅgā

On another occasion Nanda Mahārāja, mother Yaśodā and the residents of Vṛndāvana heard a wonderful story about the glories of the river Ganges. They heard that Garuḍa, the carrier of Lord Viṣṇu, had once captured a large snake near the banks of the Ganges. While he was flying away with the snake in his claws, the tail of the snake accidentally touched the water of the Ganges. Immediately the snake changed into a four-armed form like the residents of Vaikuṇṭha. Amazed, Garuḍa placed the four-armed personality on his back and carried him all the way to Vaikuṇṭha. Hearing about this wonderful story and the potency of bathing in the Ganges, all the residents of Vraja decided that they would make a pilgrimage to the river Ganges and take bath.

Seeing the arrangements being made for the journey, Kṛṣṇa informed Nanda and Yaśodā that there was no need to go out of Vraja to take bath in the Ganges, as the Ganges was present in Vraja itself. However, Nanda Mahārāja and the other *Vrajavāsīs* thought that as Kṛṣṇa was just a small child, He did not fully understand the matter. But Kṛṣṇa kept insisting and finally Nanda Baba relented. Accompanied by all the inhabitants of Vṛndāvana, he followed Kṛṣṇa to the middle of Govardhana Hill.

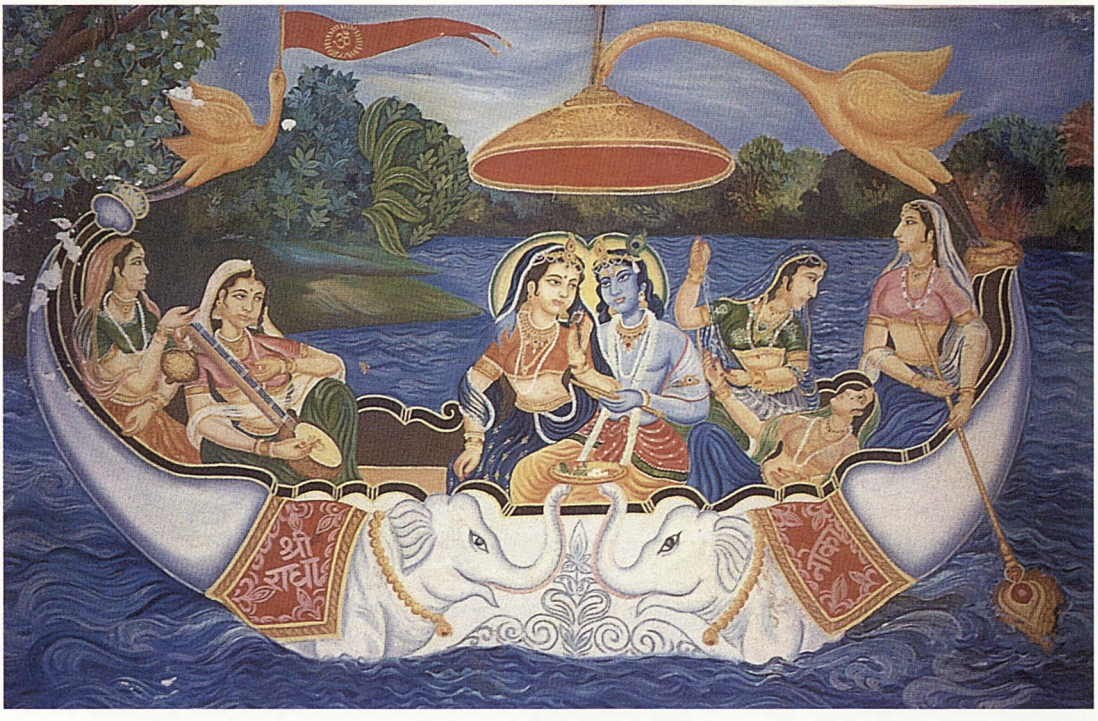
When Kṛṣṇa arrived at the shore of Mānasī-gaṅgā, Gaṅgā Mātā, the river Ganges personified, suddenly appeared from the water and offered prayers to the Lord. When all the inhabitants of Vṛndāvana saw Gaṅgā Mātā they offered their obeisances to her. Then, led by Nanda Mahārāja, they all took their holy bath in the Mānasī-gaṅgā.

Many wonderful pastimes between Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa also took place at Mānasī-gaṅgā. Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī has narrated one such episode known as Noka-vihār (boating pastime) in his book *Gopāla-campu.*

One late afternoon Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī and the cowherd girls came to the shore of Mānasī-gaṅgā in order to cross over to the other side so they could sell their pots of yogurt, butter and milk sweets in the nearby market. Unfortunately only one very old boat was available and the boatman was just a young boy dressed in a large cloak, with a peacock feather on his head. The *gopīs* inquired from the boatman if he could take them across to the other shore. The boatman agreed and inquired how much they could pay him. After some argument the *gopīs* agreed to pay the boatman in milksweets and butter.

Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī and the *gopīs* got aboard the boat and the boatman started rowing. After rowing for some distance the boatman suddenly stopped and lay back. He informed the *gopīs* he was feeling tired and hungry and refused to go any further unless they fed him some milksweets. In an angry mood the *gopīs* refused, but when they saw he was not going to move, they relented and fed him milksweets.

After filling himself up, the boatman informed the *gopīs* that he would now have to take a little rest as he was feeling completely bloated. He asked if two of the *gopīs* could massage his legs and another two his arms. On hearing this the *gopīs* became even more angry and told the boatman that they would certainly take hold of his legs and arms and throw him into the water. On hearing the angry words of the *gopīs* the boatman sat up and started rowing, but they had hardly moved any further when he stopped again. Pointing to the floor of the boat he told the *gopīs* that his old boat was filling up with water and slowly sinking due to the heavy weight. The boatman also said that unless they threw all their heavy pots overboard, the boat would surely sink.



A painting of the Noka-vihara pastime

Shocked to hear the words of the boatman, the *gopīs* immediately threw their pots of yogurt and butter into the water. Then the boatman told them that the boat was still too heavy and that they should now throw all their jewelry into the water. Reluctantly, the *gopīs* took off their beautiful jewelry and threw it into the water. The boatman then told them that the boat was still too heavy and that they should take off all their clothing and throw that into the water as well. Infuriated at this latest suggestion, the *gopīs* angrily informed the boatman that they would throw him into the water and that this would certainly solve the weight problem. Hearing this, the boatman again started rowing, but before he could get much further a storm appeared over the lake. Dark clouds covered the sky and a strong wind started to blow and the waves on the water became agitated. The boatman could see that Rādhārāṇī and the *gopīs* were looking very frightened fearing they might all drown. In order to allay their fears the boatman started to rock his boat back and forth to show its sturdiness.

At that moment, terrified that She might fall into the water, Rādhārāṇī leapt forward and thrust Her arms around the boatman for safety. As soon as She put Her arms around the boatman, She realized that He was none other than Her beloved Kṛṣṇa in disguise. Suddenly the clouds cleared, the wind died down, the waves became calm, and the moon suddenly appeared in the evening sky. When all the cowherd girls saw Rādhārāṇi embracing the boatman they inquired about the meaning of Her behavior. In answer to their inquiry, Rādhārāṇī pulled Kṛṣṇa's flute from under His cloak. The *gopīs* then realized that the boatman was actually the transcendental prankster Śrī Kṛṣṇa in disguise. Kṛṣṇa then took Rādhārāṇī and the *gopīs* on a wonderful boat ride around all the different islands in the Mānasī-gaṅgā lake.

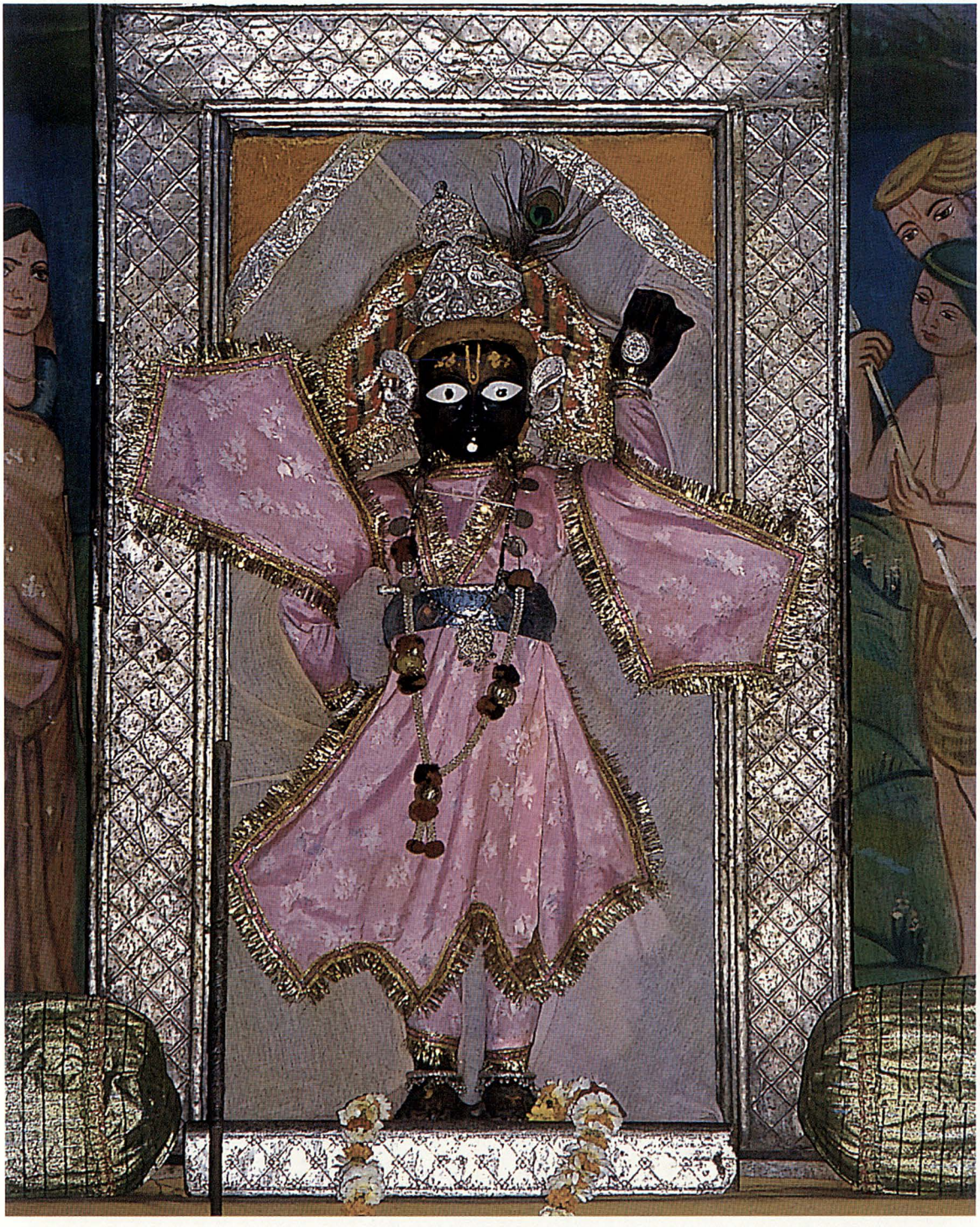
Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu also came to take His bath in the Mānasī-gaṅgā before going to have *darśana* of Lord Harideva. It is a custom amongst *Vaiṣṇavas* and local *Vrajavāsīs* to first take bath in the Mānasī-gaṅgā and then have *darśana* of Lord Harideva, before starting *parikramā* around Govardhana Hill.

11. Harideva Mandīra

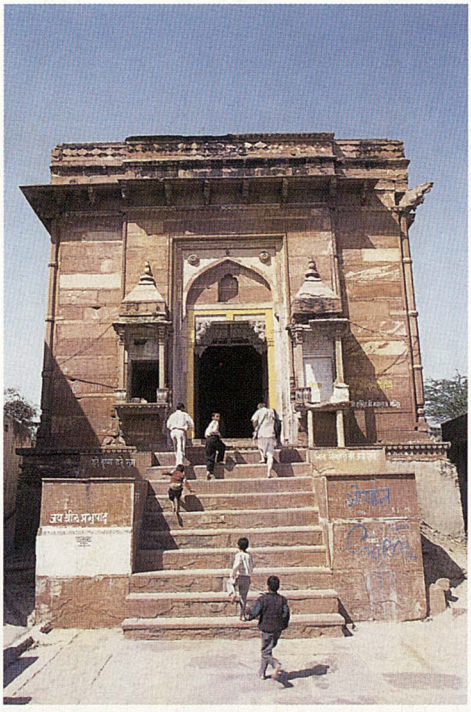
In this temple one can see the *pratibhu-mūrti* of Lord Harideva. The original Deity of Harideva was installed by Vajranabha, Lord Kṛṣṇa's great-grandson almost five thousand years ago. During the reign of terror let loose by the Muslim zealot Emperor Aurangzeb, the Deity of Lord Harideva was moved to the safety of a small village in Uttar Pradesh named Badhauli which is near the town of Rasadhan, about 300 miles south of Vṛndāvana in the vicinity of Kanpur.

There is a very wonderful story about the appearance of Lord Harideva. One day Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī and the *gopīs* were waiting for Kṛṣṇa to come and meet them near Mānasī-gaṅgā. As they were waiting, the *gopīs* started to feel intense separation from Kṛṣṇa. They then began to chant "Harideva, Harideva, Harideva" over and over again, and their feelings of separation intensified so much so, that it appeared they would give up their lives.

Suddenly a most beautiful Deity of Kṛṣṇa as a seven-year-old boy appeared there, holding Govardhana Hill in His left hand and His transcendental flute in the other.



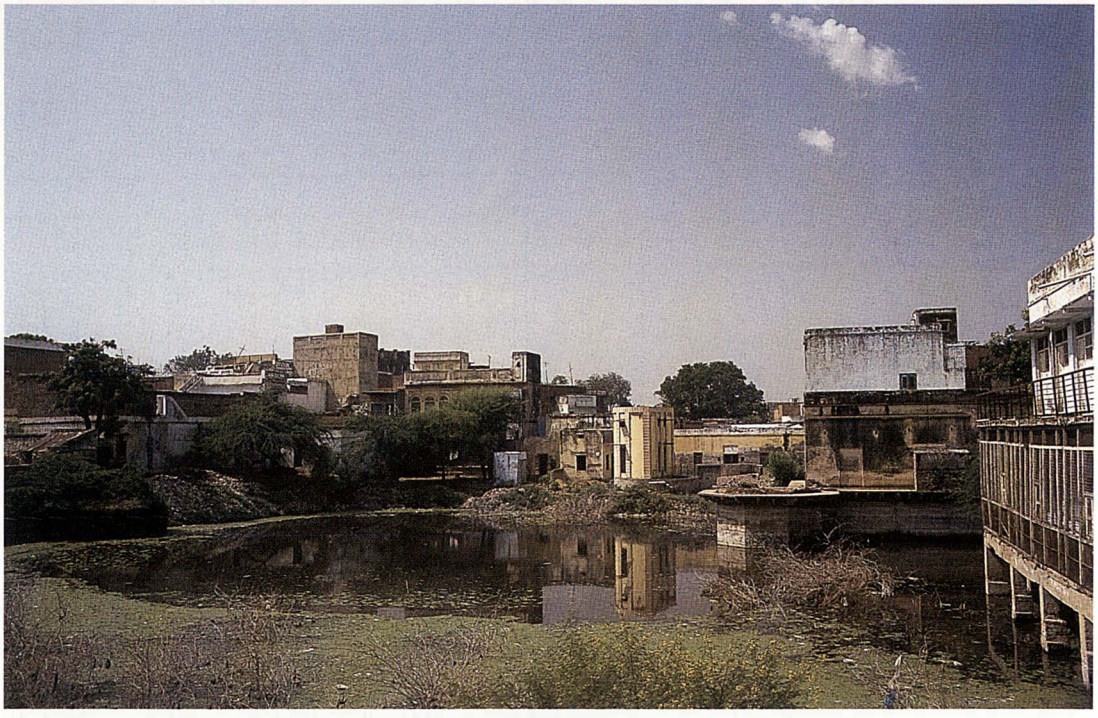
Deity of Lord Harideva



The temple of Lord Harideva

The ecstasy Rādhārāṇī and the *gopīs* felt on seeing that beautiful form knew no bounds. Rādhārāṇī and the *gopīs* performed all kinds of worship to the Deity and made many wonderful offerings. After the appearance of Govardhana-nātha Harideva, Rādhārāṇī and the *gopīs* would come here every day to worship this beautiful Deity.

Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu also visited this ancient temple on His pilgrimage to Vṛndāvana in 1515. Upon seeing the beautiful Deity of Lord Harideva, Lord Caitanya danced in ecstasy for hours. The local *Vrajavāsīs* were completly astonished to see Lord Caitanya's ecstatic love for Lord Harideva. The monumental red sandstone temple of Lord Harideva that we see today was built in the late sixteenth century by Rāja Bhagavān Singh of Jaipur, the father of Rāja Man Singh, who helped build the Govindajī temple in Vṛndāvana.



Brahmā-kuṇḍa

Mānasī Devi Mandīra

12. Brahma-kuṇḍa

This sacred *kuṇḍa* was created when Lord Brahmā performed an *abhiṣeka* (bathing ceremony) of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. After Lord Indra had performed the *abhiṣeka* ceremony, all the demigods appeared at Govardhana, headed by Lord Brahmā, and one by one they performed *abhiṣeka* of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Four smaller *kuṇḍas* that were formerly situated around Brahma-kuṇḍa have now disappeared. They were the *kuṇḍas* of Yamarāja, Varuṇa, Kuvera and Indra. Most of the one hundred and eight *kuṇḍas* situated around Govardhana Hill have also disappeared.

It is said that after bathing in Mānasī-gaṅgā and having *darśana* of Harideva, Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu rested here for some time. Lord Nityānanda also rested at Brahma-kuṇḍa when He came on pilgrimage to Vraja some years before Lord Caitanya. Unfortunately this *kuṇḍa* has fallen into disrepair over the years and is not being looked after.

13. Mānasī Devī Mandīra

Overlooking Brahma-kuṇḍa is the Mānasī Devī temple. The Deity of Mānasī Devī is the presiding Deity of Mānasī-gaṅgā. There are four important temples of Devī in Vraja: Vṛndā Devī at Kamyavana, Pateleśvarī Devī at Mathurā, Durga Devī (Yogamāya) at Vṛndāvana and Mānasī Devī at Govardhana. It is said that by praying at the feet of one of these Goddesses, one may achieve an eternal position in the Vṛndāvana pastimes of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

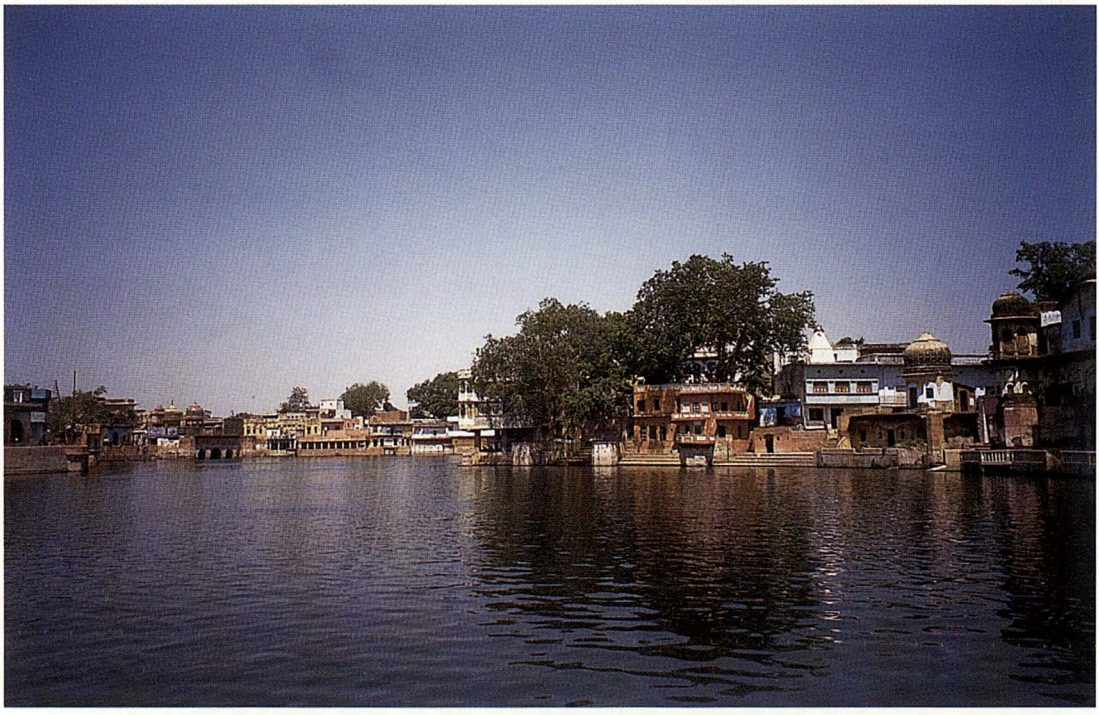
The Mukharavinda Mandīra on the banks of Mānasī-gaṅgā

Mukharavinda-śīlā (front) and the Mukut-śīlā

14. Mukharavinda Mandīra

This majestic sandstone temple situated on the banks of Mānasī-gaṅgā contains the lotus mouth of Giri-Govardhana. *Mukharvinda* means lotus mouth. Pilgrims visiting the temple bring offerings of milk and sweets to feed the Mukharvinda-śilā. Gallons of milk are poured over this sacred Govardhana-śilā everyday. Although there are a number of other *śilās* that the local people claim to be the Mukharvinda, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī has confirmed that this *śilā* is actually the real Mukharvinda.

Just behind the Mukharavind-śilā one can see standing upright the Mukut-śilā. This *śilā* is marked with the outline of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's *mukut* (crown). The *Vrajavāsīs* traditionally end their *parikramā of* Govardhana Hill by having *darśana* at the Mukharvinda temple and then go for a final dip in Mānasī-gaṅgā.



A view of Cakra Tīrtha on the northern bank of Mānasī-gaṅgā

15. Cakra Tīrtha

I worship the lakes on all sides of Govardhana Hill, including Śrī Lake, Brahmā Lake, Kadamba-khaṇḍa Lake, Kuṣuma Lake, Rudra Lake, Apsarā Lake, Gaurikā Lake, Jyotsnā-mokṣaṇa Lake, Mālyahāra Lake, Vibudhāri Lake and Indradhvaja Lake—and I also worship the gem-studded thrones on Daivata Hill at Cakra-tīrtha.

Vraja-vilās-stava 79
Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī

This is the spot on the northern bank of Mānasī-gaṅgā where Lord Kṛṣṇa's Sudarśana Cakra is embedded. When Kṛṣṇa was holding Govardhana Hill and protecting the *Vrajavāsīs* from the torrents of rain sent by Indra, the Lord could see that the huge deluge of water on the hill might wash down, creating a flood that would drown everyone in its wake. Therefore Kṛṣṇa released His Sudarśana Cakra. It stayed over the hill for seven days and produced heat equal to seven suns, evaporating large quantities of rain water and averting a flood. Sudarśana Cakra requested Kṛṣṇa a place to stay in Vraja, and the Lord told him to stay here at this place, which became celebrated as Cakra-tīrtha.

Cakaleśvara Mahadeva Mandir

16. Cakaleśvara Mahādeva Mandīra

This famous Śiva temple contains the Deity (*linga*) of Cakaleśvara Mahādeva and is located at Cakra-tīrtha on the banks of Mānasī-gaṅgā. There are five important Deities of Lord Śiva in Vraja who are protectors of the holy dhāma; namely Gopeśvara at Vṛndāvana, Bhuteśvara at Mathurā, Nandeśvara at Nandagram, Kameśvara at Kamyavana and Cakaleśvara here at Cakra-tīrtha.

17. Sanātana Gosvāmī Bhajana Kuṭira

Right next to the Cakaleśvara Mahādeva temple is the *bhajana kuṭira* of Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī. During the last years of his life, Sanātana Gosvāmī came to this place at Cakra-tīrtha and performed *bhajana*. When Sanātana Gosvāmī first stayed here, there were so many mosquitoes he decided to move elsewhere. Just at that moment as he was packing up his few belongings, Cakaleśvara Mahādeva (Lord Śiva) appeared before him in the guise of a *brāhmaṇa* and asked him why he was going away. Sanātana explained that the mosquitoes were a constant source of disturbance and he found it very difficult when he was writing his books.

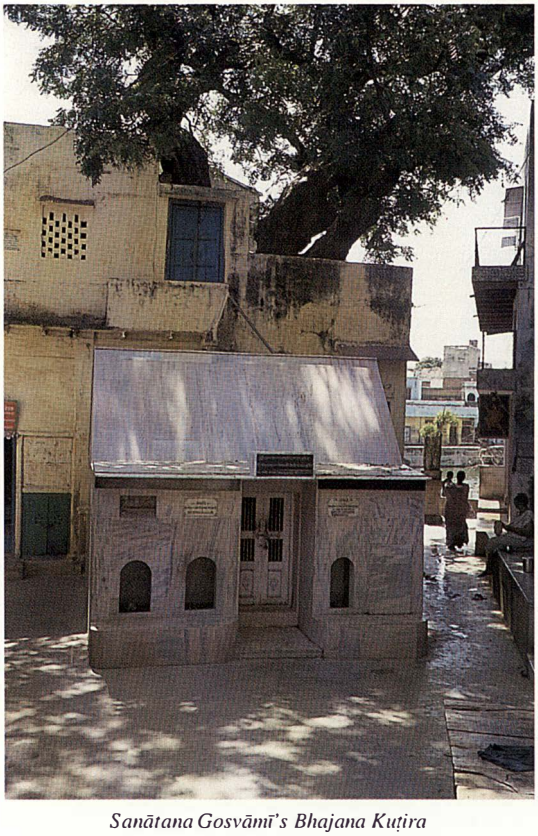
The *brāhmaṇa* informed Sanātana that from now on the mosquitoes would no longer disturb him and he could continue staying here at Cakra-tīrtha. Sanātana stayed and found that he was no longer bothered by the mosquitoes. Local people still say that even today no mosquitoes can be found at Cakra-tīrtha.

Even at the advanced age of nearly seventy, Sanātana Gosvāmī would daily go on *parikramā*

of Govardhana Hill. One day Lord Kṛṣṇa appeared before Sanātana in the guise of cowherd boy. Kṛṣṇa informed Sanātana that as he was now very old it was no longer necessary to go on *parikramā* around Govardhana Hill. Sanātana replied that he could not give it up as it was part of his daily vows. Seeing that Sanātana was determined to continue, Kṛṣṇa brought a rock from Govardhana Hill and gave it to Sanātana. Impressed upon the rock was the lotus footprint of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the hoof print of a calf, and Kṛṣṇa's flute and stick for herding cows. Kṛṣṇa informed Sanātana that circumambulating the rock seven times would be equal to doing *parikramā* of Govardhana Hill.

On seeing the wonderful Govardhana-śilā, Sanātana felt ecstatic love, and tears

Painting inside the Bhajana Kuṭira



Sanātana Gosvāmī's Bhajana Kuṭira

flowed from his eyes. By the time he regained his composure the cowherd boy had disappeared. Sanātana then realized that He was none other than Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the guise of a cowherd boy. Sanātana shed even more tears and condemned himself for not being able to recognize his most worshipable Lord.

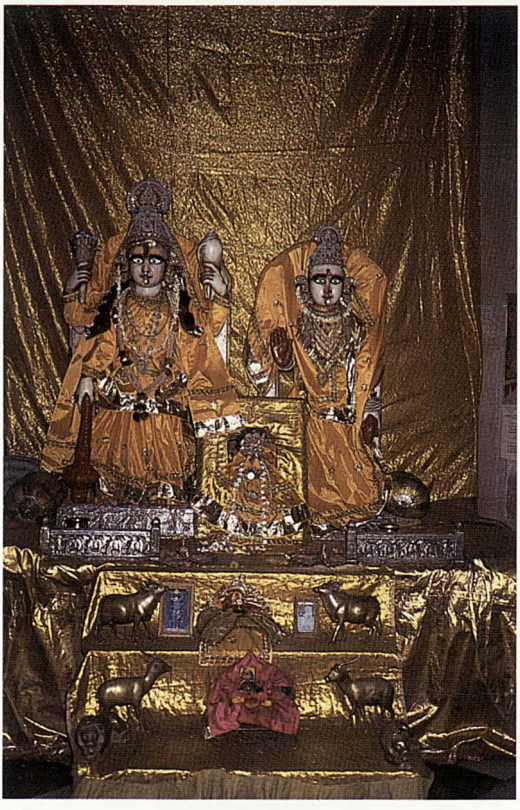
Sanātana then took the *śilā* to his *bhajana kuṭira* and, following the Lord's instructions, began to circumambulate this *śilā* everyday. After Sanātana Gosvāmī's disappearance this Govardhana-śilā was kept at the Rādhā Dāmodara temple in Vṛndāvana and can still be seen even today. There is also a similar Govardhana-śilā being kept at the Rādhā Damodāra Temple in Jaipura, but the *śilā* kept in Vṛndāvana is believed to be the original.

Sanātana Gosvāmī established the temple

of Madan-mohan in Vṛndāvana and wrote a number of important books including *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa, Bṛhad-bhagavatāmṛta, Bṛhad-vaiṣṇava-tosani-tika, Lilā-stava, Dāsami-carita* and a commentary on the Tenth Canto of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* known as *Dāsami-tipani.* Sanātana Gosvāmī was the seniormost amongst the six Gosvāmīs and was regarded as the spiritual master of all the followers of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Even the *Vrajavāsīs* who loved him dearly, considered him to be their guru.

On the *Guru-Pūrṇimā,* it was the custom of the devotees from Vṛndāvana to offer worship to Sanātana Gosvāmī. Headed by the Gosvāmīs Rūpa, Raghunātha dāsa, Raghunātha Bhaṭṭa, Gopāla Bhaṭṭa and Jīva, they all came to Sanātana's *bhajana kuṭira* at Cakra-tīrtha and requested him to lead them on *parikramā* of Mānasī-gaṅgā as he had done every year. When they saw that after a long time Sanātana Gosvāmī did not move but simply sat silently, they realized he had entered into *samādhi.*

A great cry of lamentation rent the air as the devotees shed tears in separation of their beloved Sanātana. That was in the year 1558. Sanātana Gosvāmī was the first of Lord Caitanya's disciples to leave the world, and his disappearance sent shock waves throughout the whole of Vraja as well as Bengal. The Gosvāmīs brought the sacred body of Sanātana Gosvāmī in a great procession to Vṛndāvana and entombed it in a beautiful garden next to the Madan-mohan Mandīra on the side of Dvadasāditya Hill.



Lakṣmī Nārāyaṇa Mandīra

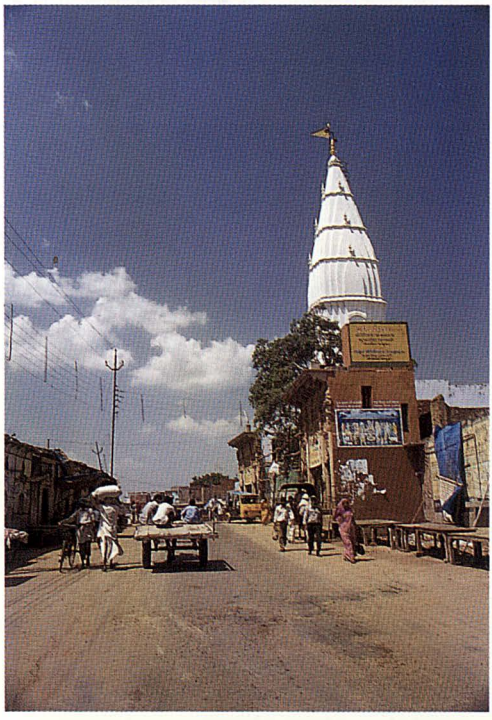
18. Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa Mandīra

In this old temple are the Deities of Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa, considered to be the *utsava mūrtis,* or festival Deities of Govardhana Hill. According to the saints of the Śrī Samprayadāya, the Alwars, this temple is one of 108 *divya desams* that should be visited by all *Vaiṣṇavas* of that *sampradāya.*

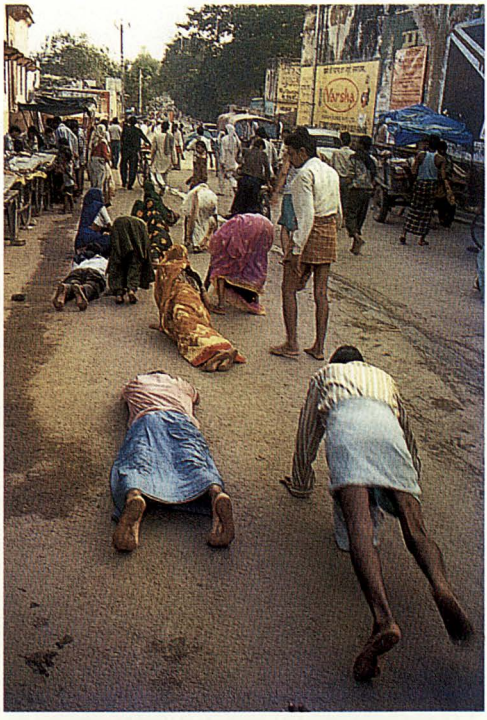
19. Dāna-Ghāṭi (Kṛṣṇa Vedi)

This is the spot on top of Govardhana Hill where Kṛṣṇa used to perform His tax (*dāna*) pastimes with the *gopīs.* Previously at this place, where the Mathurā road goes over Govardhana Hill, there was a narrow pass the *gopīs* used when they wanted to take their stock of milk products from one side of Govardhana Hill to the other.

Kṛṣṇa and His cowherd boyfriends, like Subal and Madhumaṅgala, would wait on top of the hill for the *gopīs* to arrive. They would then block the narrow pathway and demand a tax from the *gopīs* for using the pathway over Govardhana Hill. Of course the *gopīs* would refuse, and a lot



Dāna Ghāṭi



The parikramā path at Dāna Ghāṭi

of funny joking arguments would go on between the two parties. Finally the *gopīs* would have to part with some of their milk products before being allowed to continue their journey. These pastimes went on almost daily but due to the influence of Yogamāyā, the *gopīs* would forget the previous days episode. All these wonderful tax pastimes have been fully described by Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī in his book *Dāna-keli-kamudī.*

20. Rādhārāṇī's Foot-print

At Dāna Ghaṭi, impressed upon a rock from Govardhana Hill, is the lotus foot-print of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. Pilgrims stop here and worship Rādhārāṇī's lotus feet by offering flowers, pouring milk over the *śilā* and circumambulating three times around before continuing their *parikramā.* Priests say that the foot-print on the right is Kṛṣṇa's.

On the left is Rādhārānī's foot -print

The temple of Dāni Raya on top of Govardhana Hill

Deities of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma at ISKCON Govardhana

21. Dāni Raya Temple

This temple dedicated to Kṛṣṇa's pastimes of taxing the *gopis* is known as Dāni Raya. *Dāni* means tax and Raya is a name of Kṛṣṇa. The temple has now been abandoned and the priests have moved the Govardhana-sila they were worshiping in that temple to a new temple known as Dāna Ghāti Girirāja Mandira, where the Mathurā road crosses Govardhana Hill.

22. Bhaktivedānta Aśrāma (Iskcon Govardhana)

This beautiful property was formerly owned by the Mahārāja of Chattarpur in Madhya Pradesh and was used by him whenever he came to Vraja on pilgrimage. ISKCON plans to gradually develop the property into a regular temple with facilities for devotees visiting Govardhana Hill and going on *parikramā*.

ISKCON's palace at Govardhana

The Mahārāja of Chattarpur had been worshiping Lord Kṛṣṇa in the form of a beautiful Govardhana-śilā in a small shrine. When the devotees moved in, they continued the worship of this Deity. When digging a large hole for an underground water tank, the devotees discovered a Govardhana-śilā that turned out to be exactly the same size and shape as the existing Kṛṣṇa-śilā. This śilā was whitish in color which signifies it was a Balarāma śilā. In great jubilation the devotees installed Lord Balarāma next to Lord Kṛṣṇa. From the roof of the palace one gets a panoramic view of Govardhana Hill as well as the nearby town of Govardhana.

23. Dāna-nirvartana-Kuṇḍa

Because the paying of the tax debt happened at this place, when the devotees who have realized this pastime assemble together they refer to it as Dāna-nivartana-kuṇḍa. May I always reside at this lake, which is hidden from persons uninterested in transcendental rasa, but revealed to those who understand Kṛṣṇa's acting as a toll collector.

Vraja-vilās-stava 78

Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmi

This sacred *kuṇḍa* is the site of another wonderful pastime where Kṛṣṇa tried to extract tax from the *gopīs*. Once, when Rādhārāṇī and Her girlfriends were at Rādhā-kuṇḍa, one of Rādhārāṇi's pet parrots informed Her of a great sacrifice being conducted at Govinda-kuṇḍa.

The beautiful Dāna-nirvartana-kuṇḍa

Taking bath and dressing very nicely, Rādhārāṇī and all Her girlfriends left for Govinda-kuṇḍa, carrying golden pots of milk products on their heads.

Meanwhile, Kṛṣṇa's pet parrot informed Him that Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī was proceeding towards Govinda-kuṇḍa along with Her girlfriends. Immediately Kṛṣṇa and His cowherd boyfriends came to this sacred *kuṇḍa* and waited for the *gopīs* to arrive. When Rādhārāṇī and the *gopīs* arrived, Kṛṣṇa challenged them to stop and pay a tax for using the pathway. He accused them of being thieves for regularly using the pathway to sell their milk products but never ever paying any tax. An argument then started between the two parties.

When the argument turned erotic by Kṛṣṇa's clever use of words, Rādhārāṇī warned Him to stay away and not even dare to touch Her, otherwise the milk products She was carrying for the sacrifice would become contaminated. A cuckoo sitting in a nearby tree spoke to Kṛṣṇa and advised Him to simply speak nice words to this very proud girl and just take the tax. Kṛṣṇa then told the *gopīs* to wait a moment while His assistants calculated the tax amount. Kṛṣṇa then informed Rādhārāṇī that each of Her girlfriends must give a handful of diamonds as tax. Kṛṣṇa told Rādhārāṇī that She would have to pay an extra tax for all the beautiful parts of Her body.

Hearing these words of Kṛṣṇa, Rādhārāṇī became angry and started to walk away, but Kṛṣṇa forcibly stopped Her. He told Rādhārāṇī that She could go to the sacrifice and on the way back pay the tax, the only condition was that Lalitā would have to stay behind as a hostage just to ensure that the *gopīs* returned. On hearing this, Lalitā became angry and told the other *gopīs* to call Mother Yaśodā, the *brāhmaṇas* at the sacrifice, as well as Rādhārāṇī's mother-in-law Jatila.

Govardhana Hill near Dāna-nirvartana-kuṇḍa

At that moment, Rādhārāṇī's close companion Nandimukhi arrived on the spot, and proposed a solution to the problem. She told Kṛṣṇa that He should immediately release Rādhārāṇī and the *gopīs*, otherwise their reputation as chaste and saintly girls would be ruined. Nandimukhi then assured Kṛṣṇa that Rādhārāṇī and the *gopīs* would return to this grove on the banks of this same *kuṇḍa* the next day to pay the tax in full. Because Rādhārāṇī and the *gopīs* promised to return (*nirvartana*) to this *kuṇḍa* and pay the tax (*dāna*), this place became famous as Dāna-nirvartana-kuṇḍa. However, the *gopīs* were feeling very angry at Kṛṣṇa for the way He had obstructed Rādhārāṇī on Her way to the sacrifice at Govinda-kuṇḍa, so they decided to teach Him a lesson.

One of the largest Govardhana sīlās

The next day, Lalitā and Viśākhā and hundreds of *gopīs* hid themselves all around the *kuṇḍa* where Kṛṣṇa was going to come and collect the tax payment. When Kṛṣṇa arrived with a few cowherd boys the *gopīs* pounced on them, gave them a good thrashing, tied them up to a tree and humiliated them in various ways. Lalitā then demanded that Kṛṣṇa pay a tax to Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, the queen of Vṛndāvana, because His cows were eating the grass of Her forests. Lalitā then brought Rādhārāṇī and forced Kṛṣṇa to bow down to Her lotus feet, ask forgiveness and accept Her as the queen of Vṛndāvana. These pastimes have been elaborately described by Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī in his book *Dāna-keli-cintāmaṇi*.

24. Annakūṭa-kṣetra

At this place the enemy of Agha assumed the gigantic form of Govardhana and eagerly devoured the food presented by the venerable King of Vraja. He also tricked Śrī Rādhā by offering benedictions. I take shelter of this spot known as Annakūṭa.

Vraja-vilās-stava 75

Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī

The whole area of Govardhana Hill, from Dāna-Nirvartana-kuṇḍa up to the village of Aniyora, is known as Annakūṭa-kṣetra. This is the place where the inhabitants of Vraja made a gigantic offering of food to Govardhana Hill on the occasion of Govardhana-pūjā. There were literally thousands upon thousands of hills made of *samosās*, *kachoris*, rice, *halva*, *puris*, sweetballs, *sabjis* and a variety of milk preparations, all for the pleasure of Giri-Govardhana.

Once on seeing His father, Nanda Baba, and all the inhabitants of Vṛndāvana collecting

Annakūṭa-kṣetra looking towards Aniyora

Present day gopīs near Govardhana Hill

various paraphernalia for the annual Indra-pūjā, Lord Kṛṣṇa forbade them to worship Indra and told them to worship Govardhana Hill instead. Kṛṣṇa explained that it was Govardhana Hill that provided all the necessities of life and that by worshiping the sacred hill all good fortune would automatically come to them.

Following Kṛṣṇa's advice, Nanda Baba and the *Vrajavāsīs* cooked thousands of wonderful preparations to be offered to Govardhana Hill. When everything was ready for the *pūjā*, Kṛṣṇa suddenly expanded from His own transcendental body another form as gigantic as a big hill. This gigantic form of Kṛṣṇa then declared that Govardhana was nondifferent from Himself. He then started to eat the mountains of food preparations that filled an area almost two miles long. And now and then He drank water from the various *kuṇḍa*s situated around Govardhana Hill. As He stretched out His huge hand to pick up more food, the *Vrajavāsīs* had to run back out of the way. While eating with His

Annakūṭa-kṣetra looking towards Dāna-nirvartana-kuṇḍa

right hand Girirāja (another name of Govardhana) began to snap the fingers of His left hand and say, *Aniyora, aniyora*, which means "Bring more, bring more." Thus the name of the nearby village later became known as Aniyora.

After finishing all the food preparations Girirāja was very satisfied. The cowherd men offered Him *ārati*, after which Girirāja gave His blessings and disappeared. The cowherd men then worshiped the cows and fed them nice fresh grass. Nanda Mahārāja called the *brāhmaṇas* to perform a huge *yajña* (sacrifice) which all the demigods attended—except Lord Indra who, feeling insulted, was thinking how to punish these cowherd men of Vraja for having neglected to worship him. After the *yajña*, all the residents of Vṛndāvana, keeping their cows in front of them, circumambulated Govardhana Hill while singing about the glories and wonderful pastimes of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

A painting of the Annakūṭa ceremony

THE LIFTING OF GOVARDHANA HILL

The destroyer of Mura is always eager to protect the cowherd community. He has no other interest. He maintained the honor of Govardhana Hill by lovingly holding him aloft for seven days, playfully exhibiting with the hand that held the hill charming gestures of respectful worship. May that Govardhana—whose caves are smeared with kuṅkuma left behind from the pastimes there of Gāndharvikā and Murabhit, and whose exquisite boulders are covered with precious gems—protect us all.

Vraja-vilās-stava 51

Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī

On seeing that the inhabitants of Vṛndāvana had neglected to worship him, Indra, the King of Heaven, decided to punish them by sending terrible rain clouds to inundate the land of Vṛndāvana with water. Seething with rage, King Indra was thinking that simply on the advice of a talkative village boy named Kṛṣṇa, the *Vrajavāsis* had stopped the Indra-yajña and instead worshiped Govardhana Hill, the *brāhmaṇas* and the cows. Unfortunately, being so puffed-up with his own self-importance and false prestige, Indra could not understand that this simple village boy called Kṛṣṇa was in fact the Supreme Personality of Godhead, enjoying His transcendental pastimes as a cowherd boy in the land of Vṛndāvana.

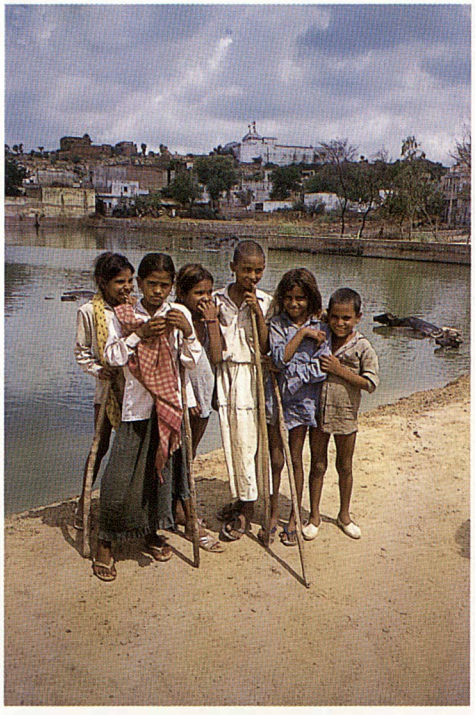
Calling for the *sāṁvartaka* clouds of devastation that are used to destroy the whole cosmic manifestation at the end of a *kalpa*, Indra ordered them to proceed to Vṛndāvana and cause extensive floods that would destroy the livelihood of the inhabitants. Within no time torrents

of rain as thick as pillars, accompanied by thunder, lighting and howling winds, descended on Vṛndāvana, causing great misery to its inhabitants. The land became so full of water that no one could distinguish between high ground and low ground. Shivering because of the severe cold brought about by the torrential rains, the inhabitants of Vṛndāvana approached Lord Kṛṣṇa for shelter.

Understanding the situation, Kṛṣṇa immediately lifted Govardhana Hill with His left hand, just as a child picks up a mushroom, and held it up like an umbrella. Bringing all their household possessions, the inhabitants of Vṛndāvana, along with their cows, took shelter from the torrential rains under Govardhana Hill. For seven days they remained safe under the hill, not even disturbed by hunger and thirst. They were simply astonished to see beautiful Kṛṣṇa balancing Govardhana Hill on His little finger.

His false pride cut to pieces, baffled and dumbstruck, King Indra called back the sāṁvartaka clouds of devastation. At that moment the rains stopped, the sky cleared and the sun shone again over the beautiful land of Vṛndāvana. Kṛṣṇa asked the *Vrajavāsīs* to return to their homes without fear, and then He gently replaced Govardhana Hill in exactly the same place. Nanda Baba, mother Yaśodā, Balarāma and all the inhabitants of Vṛndāvana embraced Kṛṣṇa to their hearts content. The demigods in the higher planets began to beat kettledrums and shower the earth with fragrant flowers. As the *gopīs* began to sing beautiful songs about the glorious and uncommon pastimes of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, all the inhabitants of Vṛndāvana returned to their respective homes along with their cows.

A view of Govardhana Hill

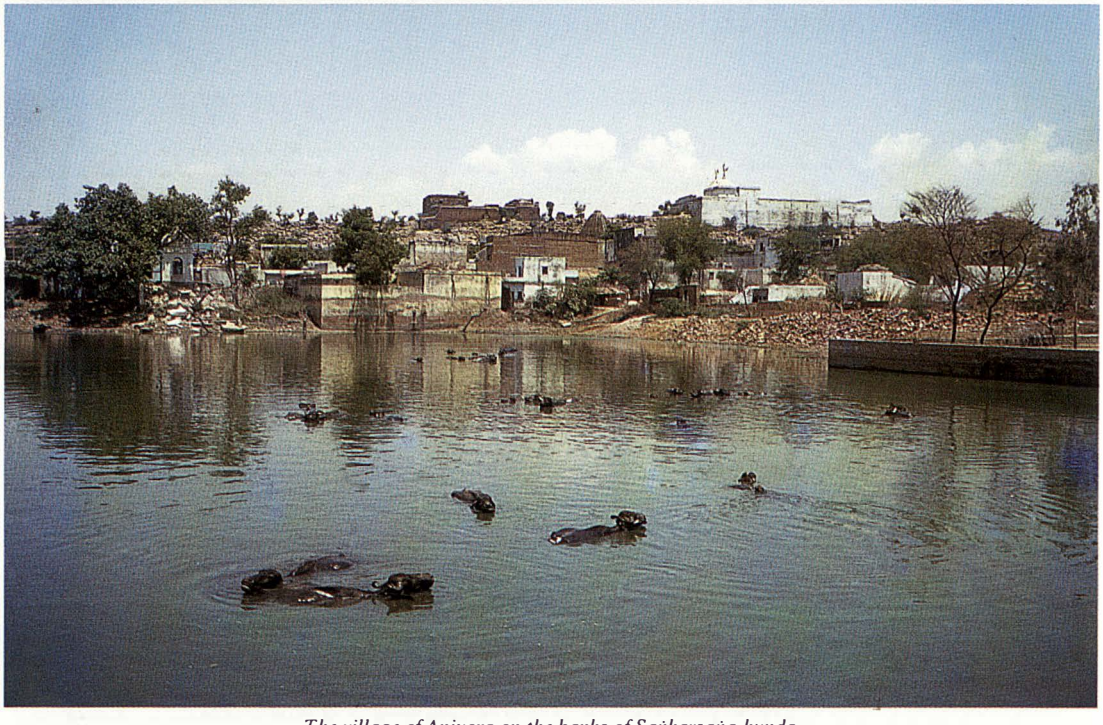


Young cowherders at Aniyora

25. Aniyora

In this ancient village of Aniyora one can see the temple of Lord Balarāma (Daujī), also known as the Saṅkarṣaṅa Mandira. In this same village is the *prakaṭa-sthāli* (appearance place) of the Gopāla Deity found by Mādhavendra Purī. We can also see the original temple of Gopāla situated on top of Govardhana Hill. When Kṛṣṇa appeared before Mādhavendra Purī in the guise of a cowherd boy, he informed Mādhavendra that He lived in the village of Aniyora.

This village got its name from the famous Annakūṭa ceremony of feeding Govardhana Hill. When Kṛṣṇa, in the huge form of Govardhana, was eating all the wonderful preparations brought by the *Vrajavāsīs*, He began snapping his fingers saying, "Bring more, bring more." Thus, the name Aniyora — which means "bring more" — became the name of this village.



The village of Aniyora on the banks of Saṅkarṣaṅa-kuṇḍa

26. Balarāma (Daujī) Mandīra

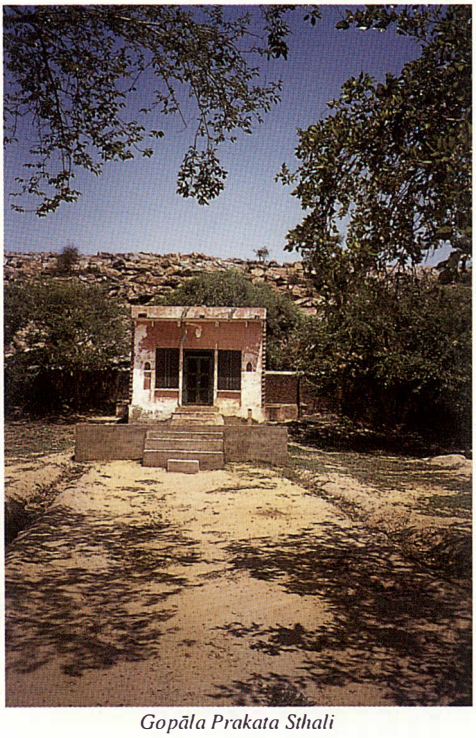
This ancient Deity of Daujī (Lord Balarāma) who is sometimes known as Saṅkarṣaṅa, was installed five thousand years ago by Vajranābha, Lord Kṛṣṇa's great grandson. The Deity is of black stone and about five feet tall. Next to the Deity of Balarāma is a small Deity of His younger brother Kṛṣṇa. When the Mohammedans raided Aniyora during the reign of Aurangazeb, this Deity of Balarāma was hidden in a nearby lake known as Saṅkarṣaṅa-kuṇḍa.

The Deity of Lord Balarāma and a small Deity of Kṛṣṇa

27. Gopāla Prakata Sthali (Śrīngara Sthali)

This is the actual spot where Śrīla Mādhavendra Purī discovered the beautiful Deity of Gopāla, later known as Śrī Nāthajī.

Once, when Mādhavendra Purī had completed his *parikramā* of Govardhana Hill, he came and sat on the banks of Govinda-kuṇḍa to take rest. It was his custom never to beg for food and accept only what was offered. Suddenly a beautiful cowherd boy appeared before him, offered him a pot of milk and requested him to drink it. Within himself Mādhavendra Purī felt very satisfied to see this beautiful cowherd boy, and he asked him why and from where he had come.



Gopāla Prakata Sthali

The beautiful cowherd boy replied, "I am from the nearby village of Aniyora and some of the ladies from this village, while fetching water, had seen you sitting under this tree and asked me to bring you milk." The boy then told Mādhavendra Purī that he now had to go and milk the cows but that he would return later to collect the empty pot.

After drinking the milk Mādhavendra washed the pot and kept it nearby; however, the boy did not return. Mādhavendra started chanting in great

Site of the Gopāla Deity's discovery

ecstasy until almost dawn. When he finally fell asleep he had the most wonderful dream: the same beautiful cowherd boy appeared and, taking him by the hand, led him to a bushy area in the jungle next to Govardhana Hill. The boy pointed to a large bush and informed Mādhavendra that this was His residence. The boy further explained that due to cold, rain, wind and scorching heat, He suffered very much.

The beautiful cowherd boy then asked Mādhavendra to bring some villagers to help pull Him out of the bushes, construct a temple on top of the hill and install Him in that temple. The boy said His name was Gopāla, the lifter of Govardhana Hill, and that he had been wondering when Mādhavendra Purī would come here and serve Him. He said that when the Mohammedan soldiers attacked, the *brāhmaṇas* who had been serving Him, hid Him in the bushes and ran away out of fear for their lives. It was a very good thing that Mādhavendra had come, the boy said, and he should now remove Him from the bushes with great care.

After saying this the beautiful cowherd boy disappeared. Mādhavendra woke up with a jolt and began to shed tears. He began lamenting that although Kṛṣṇa had appeared before him in the guise of a cowherd boy and given him milk, he could not even recognize Him.

After crying for some time Mādhavendra gathered his senses and set about fulfilling the order of Lord Gopāla. He went to the nearby village and called all the people to help him rescue Gopāla Rāja from the jungle. After cutting away the thick bushes they were amazed to see the beautiful Deity of Gopāla completely covered in long grass and smeared with dirt.

The strongest of the villagers lifted the Deity of Gopāla and followed Mādhavendra Purī to the top of Govardhana Hill. They made an altar and backrest with large stones, while the *brāhmaṇas* prepared to perform an *abhiṣeka*. A total of nine hundred pots of water were brought from Govinda-kuṇḍa and poured over the Deity of Gopāla amidst the sound of musical instruments and the chanting of prayers. The Deity's body was massaged with perfumed oils and bathed again, this time in pure ghee, then in *pañca-gavya* and lastly in *pancāmṛta*. After a final massage with perfumed oils the Deity was dressed in nice clothing, and many wonderful food preparations were offered. After *ārati*, everyone offered full *daṇḍavats* to the Lord of Govardhana Hill. The installation of Lord Gopāla Rāja by Mādhavendra Purī Gosvāmī took place in the year 1479.

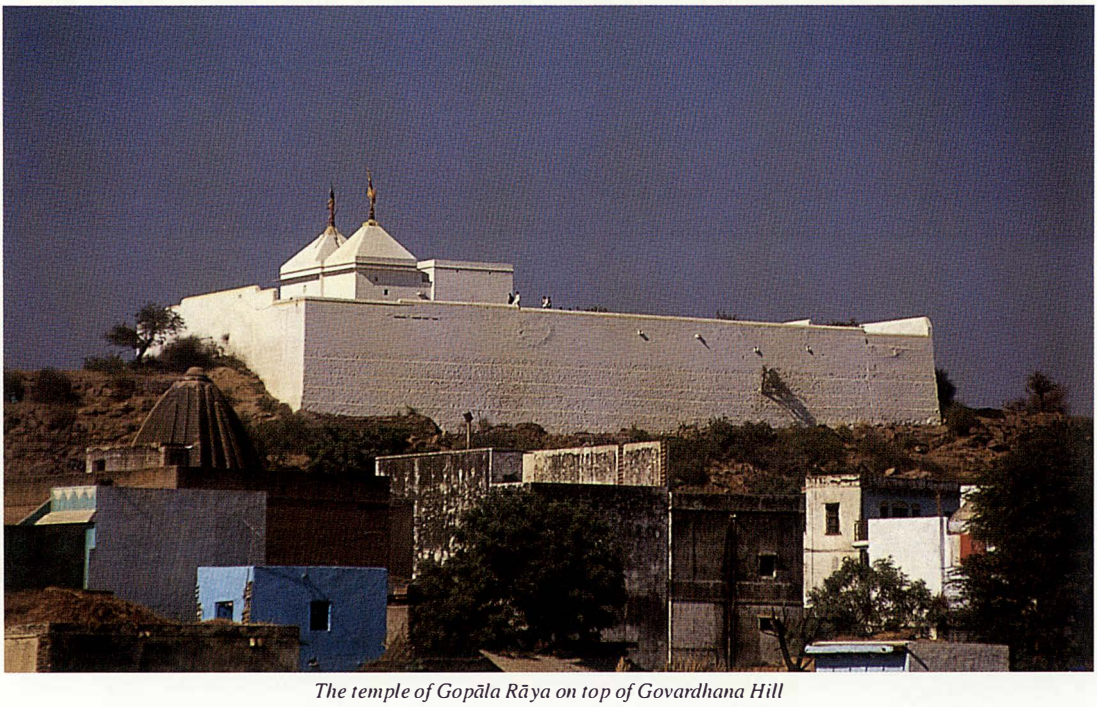
When Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu toured Vraja in 1515, He refused to climb on Govardhana Hill to have *darśana* of Lord Gopāla, considering that since Govardhana Hill is nondifferent from Kṛṣṇa, it would be a serious offense. Following in the footsteps of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu, Gauḍiya *Vaiṣṇavas* do not climb on Govardhana Hill. In the case of Mādhavendra Purī, the

parama-guru of Lord Caitanya, he was directly ordered to take Gopālajī to the top of Govardhana and install Him there. Understanding that Lord Caitanya was not going to climb Govardhana Hill and see Him, Gopāla Rāja decided to play a trick and on the pretext that some Pathan soldiers were about to attack Aniyora, left that place and hid at a village called Ganthuli-grāma. On hearing about this, Lord Caitanya went to Ganthuli-grāma and had *darśana* of the beautiful Gopāla Deity to His full satisfaction.

At that time the worship of the Gopāla Deity was being done by two *brāhmaṇa* disciples of Mādhavendra Purī. Somehow or other these *brāhmaṇas* disappeared. Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī was consulted on this matter and he appointed Vitthalanātha, the son of Vallabhācārya, as the head priest. Around 1670, when the Muslim tyrant Aurangzeb unleashed his reign of terror on Vṛndāvana, the Deity of Gopāla was moved to Nāthadvara in Rājasthan for safety. From that time on the Deity of Gopāla became known as Śrī Nāthajī, and till this day the descendants of Vitthalanātha in the Vallabha Sampradāya, continue to worship the Deity on a grand scale.

28. Gopāla Rāya Mandīra

This majestic temple on top of Govardhana Hill is the temple of Gopāla Rāya. This is the actual place where Mādhavendra Purī installed the Deity of Gopāla. The temple has since been rebuilt and the original Deity of Gopāla has moved to Nāthadvāra. Presently there is a Govardhana-śilā being worshiped in the temple. The priests in this temple belong to the Vallabha Sampradāya. Next to this temple is another old temple of Lord Śiva.



The temple of Gopāla Rāya on top of Govardhana Hill

Saṅkarṣaṇa-kuṇḍa with Govardhana Hill in the background

29. Saṅkarṣaṇa-kuṇḍa

By simply bathing once in Saṅkarṣaṇa-kuṇḍa, which is protected by Balarāma, the sinful reactions of even those persons who have killed brāhmaṇas and committed other equally sinful acts, are immediately driven away. One need not have any doubts in this regard.

Viṣṇu Purāṇa

Buffaloes enjoying in the water at Saṅkarṣaṇa-kuṇḍa

This sacred *kuṇḍa* on the outskirts of Aniyora is dedicated to Lord Balarāma, whose name is also Saṅkarṣaṇa. Previously this *kuṇḍa* was much larger and was surrounded by beautiful *ghāṭas* but it is a long time since it has been cared for and the *ghāṭas* have now disappeared. It is said in the *Adi Varāha Purāṇa* that one who takes bath here will be freed from the sin of killing a cow.

Pilgrims touring Govardhana Hill in a Tanga

Buffaloes relaxing at Gaurī-kuṇḍa

30. Gaurī-kuṇḍa (Gauri Tirtha)

This sacred *kuṇḍa* known as Gaurī-kuṇḍa is situated just off the *parikramā* path near Saṅkarṣaṅa-kuṇḍa. There used to be a temple of Goddess Gaurī, the wife of Lord Śiva, but it has disappeared. An amusing pastime took place here, which Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī has elaborately described in his book *Vidagda-mādhava-nataka.*

One day Abhimanyu, the supposed husband of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, decided to take Rādhārāṇī to Mathurā in order to keep Her away from Kṛṣṇa. Before going he went to take the blessings of Purṇamāsī. Shocked at what he planned to do, Purṇamāsī convinced Abhimanyu that he was just hearing rumours. She told him that only if he caught Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa red-handed, could he then send Rādhā away. Abhimanyu then requested Purṇamāsī to initiate Rādhārāṇī into the worship of Goddess Gaurī Devī, as he had heard that since Candrāvalī had started to worship Gaurī Devī, her husband, Govardhana Malla, had become very wealthy.

After Purṇamāsī instructed her about worshiping Gaurī Devī, Rādhārāṇī immediately left for the Gaurī temple near Saṅkarṣaṅa-kuṇḍa. But when She arrived there, Kṛṣṇa suddenly appeared and blocked Her path. An argument started between the Divine Lovers. After having admonished Kṛṣṇa for coming there, Rādhārāṇī went into a nearby grove to pick flowers.

Meanwhile Abhimanyu heard that Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa were together at Gaurī-kuṇḍa. With his mother, Jatila, he left for Gaurī-kuṇḍa, hoping to catch Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa red-handed. Realizing what was happening, Kṛṣṇa went inside the Gaurī temple, dressed Himself up in the Deity's dresses and stood in front of Gaurī Devī. Rādhārāṇī then entered the temple and

A herd of Nilgai antelopes also called 'Blue Cows'.

began to worship Goddess Gaurī.

Abhimanyu and his mother suddenly rushed into the temple hoping to catch Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa together. On entering the temple Abhimanyu spoke in a very loud voice saying, "Today we have caught you red-handed." On hearing Abhimanyu's angry voice Rādhārāṇī fainted and fell on the ground. Just then Jatila asked Abhimanyu from where was such a divine light emanating. Abhimanyu informed his mother that the light was coming from the famous Deity of Gaurī Devī.

At that moment the *gopīs* arrived and praised Abhimanyu for having advised Rādhārāṇī to worship Gaurī Devī. "Just see," they said, "Gaurī Devī is so happy with Rādhārāṇī she has stepped out of the Deity and now stands before us."

Langur monkeys near Govardhana Hill

Grey Heron in a treetop

Seeing Rādhārāṇī prostrate on the floor before Goddess Gaurī, Abhimanyu asked the *gopīs* what benediction she was asking for. Suddenly Goddess Gaurī started speaking to Abhimanyu, "O brave Abhimanyu, She is praying for the removal of the great disaster that is sitting on your head." Full of fear, Abhimanyu asked the Goddess what on earth that disaster could be. Goddess Gaurī then asked Vṛndā Devī to explain. Vṛndā Devī informed Abhimanyu that King Kaṁsa was planning to cut off his head and offer it to Lord Śiva the day after next. Horrified, Jatila prayed to Goddess Gaurī to be happy with them and save her son from such a disaster. Standing up, Rādhārāṇī also prayed to Goddess Gaurī to save Abhimanyu.

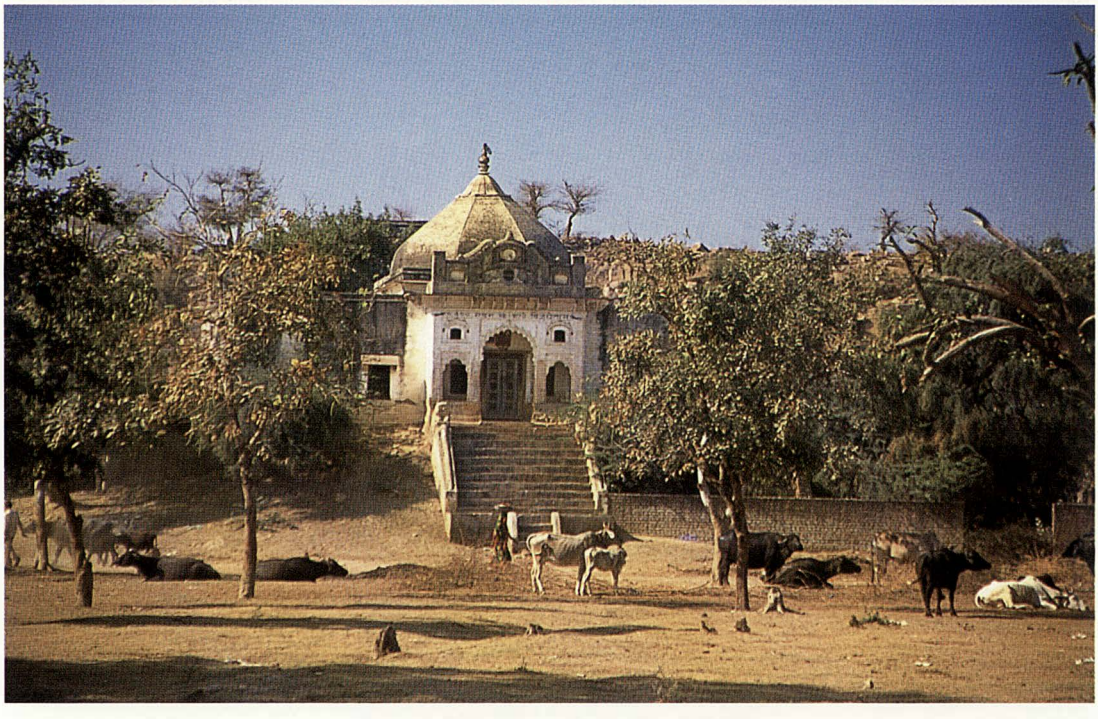
Goddess Gaurī then told Rādhārāṇī that the benediction She asked for was not at all possible. Rādhārāṇī pleaded with the Goddess, saying She could not live without Her swami (Lord). Goddess Gaurī replied that she was not much interested in the prayers of even great yogis and sages, but that because Rādhārāṇī has bound her with such love and devotion, she was forced to bless Her, but on one condition—that She never leave Vraja and always render service to her.

Abhimanyu immediately promised Gaurī Devī that he would never take Rādhārāṇī away from Vraja and that She would always engage in her service. Jatila then praised Rādhārāṇī for having saved Abhimanyu's life.

Vṛndā Devī then told Abhimanyu that a man who wrongly accuses a chaste wife with infidelity will surely cut short his own life span. Goddess Gaurī also informed him that Rādhārāṇī was the very source of his good fortune and that he should never mistrust Her. Abhimanyu then told his mother that they should immediately go home and cancel all the arrangements they had made for sending Rādhārāṇī to Mathurā.

31. Surabhi Vana

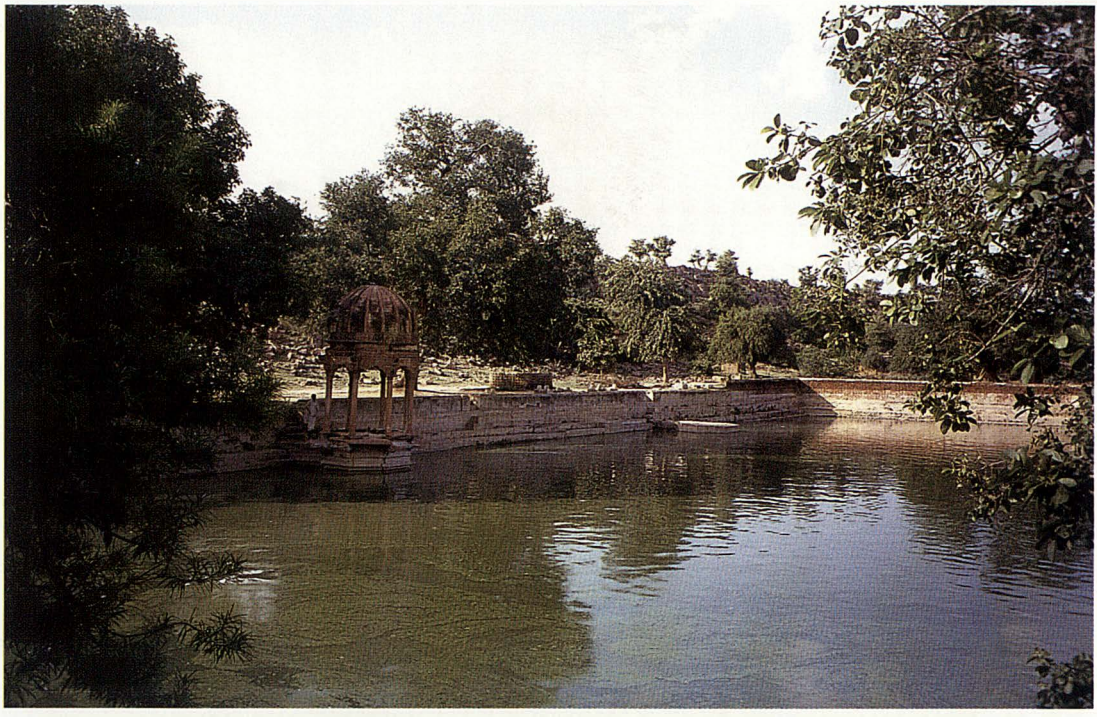
There used to be a very beautiful forest here surrounding Govinda-kuṇḍa. It was called Surabhi Vana because it was always full of Surabhi cows grazing on the fresh grasses that grew here. Near this place Surabhi, the mother of all cows, and Indra, the King of heaven, bathed Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Near Surabhi vana there is a very old temple of Madana-mohana where the cowherdsmen bring their herds to rest in the mid-morning.



The temple of Madana-mohana at Surabhivana

On a winter morning near Govinda-Kuṇḍa local herdsmen rest in the warm sunshine along with their animals

Govinda-Kuṇḍa with Rādhā Govinda Mandīra in the background



Govinda-kuṇḍa with Govardhana Hill in the background

32. GOVINDA-KUṆḌA

Humiliated and afraid of the reactions for his having acted proudly, the king of the demigods took hold of Govinda's feet. With unabashed enthusiasm he then coronated Govinda as Lord of the cows by having Mother Surabhi bathe Him with water from the celestial Gaṅgā. From the water of that bathing manifested Govinda-kuṇḍa, which, I hope, will always be visible before my eyes.

Vraja-vilās-stava 74

Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī

This is the celebrated *kuṇḍa* that was created when King Indra performed the bathing ceremony (*abhiṣeka*) of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Indra became angry with the inhabitants of Vṛndāvana who had stopped the Indra-yajña on the advice of Kṛṣṇa, and he sent devastating rainfall to Vṛndāvana to punish the *Vrajavāsis*. But when he saw Kṛṣṇa lift Govardhana Hill just like an umbrella, he understood he had made a big mistake; he had foolishly challenged the authority of Kṛṣṇa, who was none other than the Supreme Personality of Godhead, playing like an ordinary child in the transcendental land of Vṛndāvana.

In order to satisfy the Lord, Indra came here with the celestial cow Surabhi. Accompanied by all the demigods of heaven, they performed a wonderful bathing ceremony of Lord Kṛṣṇa and worshiped Him with all the paraphernalia fit for a King.

First Surabhi, the celestial cow, bathed Lord Kṛṣṇa with her milk. While Indra's elephant carrier, Airavata, bathed Indra with water from his trunk. Indra then bathed Lord Kṛṣṇa with water from the Ganges, and one by one all the demigods, headed by Lord Brahmā and accompanied by their mothers, bathed the Lord. The accumulated water from the bathing ceremony created this sacred *kuṇḍa*, which became known as Govinda-kuṇḍa.

After the bathing ceremony was completed, the demigods offered Lord Kṛṣṇa an elaborate *ārati*, and Lord Brahmā came forward to coronate Him by placing a golden crown on His head. Brahmā declared Kṛṣṇa to be the real Indra (King) of all the demigods as well as all living beings. Brahmā, Indra and the demigods then departed for their respective planets.

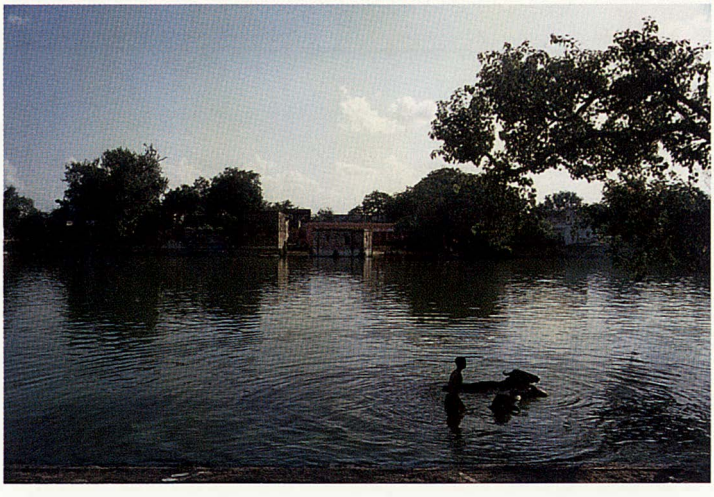
After some time, having herded all the calves together, the cowherd boys arrived at Govinda-kuṇḍa and were astonished to see all the paraphernalia for worship — *camaras*, ghee lamps, conch shells and umbrellas — lying on the ground. The cowherd boys picked up the various items and spontaneously began fanning and worshiping Kṛṣṇa in different ways. From a distance the demigods could hear the sweet singing of the cowherd boys. Turning to see, they were amazed at the way the cowherd boys were worshiping Kṛṣṇa out of natural love and affection, and they felt ashamed at their own attempts to worship Kṛṣṇa.

Just then Nanda Mahārāja and the cowherd men arrived and asked where all this wonderful paraphernalia had come from. The cowherd boys replied that while they had gone ahead to round up the calves, the paraphernalia had somehow appeared.

Madhumaṅgala spoke up, "First one cow came and spoke something to Kṛṣṇa, then a man with thousands of eyes all over his body offered obeisances. Then a large white elephant came, again and again bringing Ganges water. There was also a person with four heads and another with five, who offered prayers to Kṛṣṇa. Then all of them together offered *abhiṣeka* and bathed Kṛṣṇa, and then they offered *ārati*."

Suddenly a great voice from the sky announced, "O Nanda Mahārāja, in the same way that we coronated your son as King of the cows and the senses (Govinda), you should now coronate Kṛṣṇa as the King of Vraja." After hearing the wonderful voice from the sky, the cowherd men and their wives worshiped Kṛṣṇa with the paraphernalia left by the demigods and coronated Him as the King of Vraja.

In his book *Gopāla Campu*, Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī has noted that because all the demigods are present within the body of a cow, Lord Kṛṣṇa, by becoming King of the cows, automatically became King of the demigods and was accepted by them as their Indra (King).



Govinda-kuṇḍa, with Mādhavendra Purī's Bhājana Kuṭira on the far bank

33. Mādhavendra Purī's Bhajana Kuṭira

This is the bhajana kuṭira of Mādhavendra Purī Gosvāmī. While sitting near here under a tree Kṛṣṇa came to him disguised as a cowherd boy and offered him a pot of milk. That same evening Mādhavendra had a wonderful dream where the same cowherd boy came to him and showed the spot where Lord Gopāla was buried in the ground. Mādhavendra, with the help of the local people, first excavated then installed Lord Gopāla on top of Govardhana Hill.

34. Gopāla Mandīra

This temple, managed by the Gosvāmīs of Govindajī Mandira in Jaipur, contains the beautiful *pratibhu mūrti* (replica) of Lord Gopāla.

The Deities of Rādhā Govinda

Mādhavendra Purī's Bhajana Kuṭira

This temple is next to Mādhavendra Purī's bhajana kuṭira.

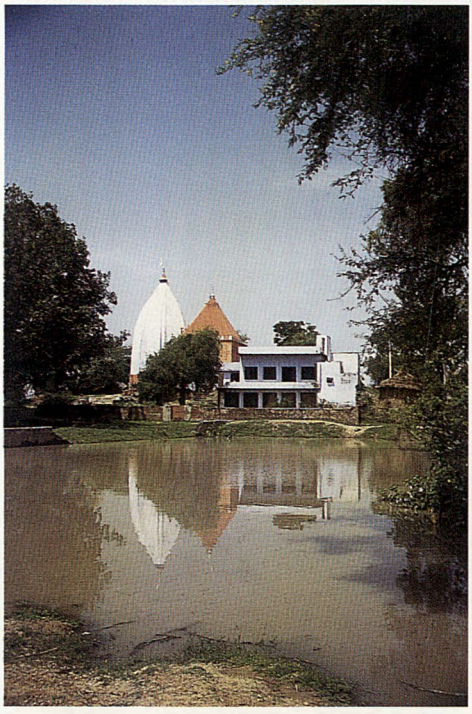
35. Indra Tila

It was on this small hill at the side of Govinda-kuṇḍa, where Lord Indra and the demigods headed by Lord Brahmā stood during the bathing ceremony (*abhiṣeka*) of Lord Kṛṣṇa. This small hill is now surrounded by many buildings and it is very difficult to see it clearly.

36. Rādhā Govinda Mandīra

It is said that the Deity of Lord Govindadeva in this temple was originally installed five thousand years ago by Vajranabha, Lord Kṛṣṇa's great-grandson.

The beautiful pratibhu-mūrti of Lord Gopāla



Nipa-kuṇḍa and Rādhā Govinda Mandīra

37. Nipa-kuṇḍa

Formerly around this beautiful *kuṇḍa* there used to be many nipa (*kadamba*) trees. Kṛṣṇa and the cowherd boys used to take lunch here on the banks of this *kuṇḍa* and use the leaves of the *kadamba* trees as cups.

Once the *gopis* were passing this way, carrying pots of butter and yogurt on their heads. Kṛṣṇa suddenly appeared from the bushes and blocking the path, demanded all the butter and yogurt as a tax. The *gopis* chastised Kṛṣṇa and then threatened to tell King Kaṁsa. Kṛṣṇa replied that He was not at all afraid of Kaṁsa and that in the future He would kill him and throw his dead body near Govardhana Hill. On hearing Kṛṣṇa's words the *gopis* laughed and leaving their pots on the ground, returned home. Kṛṣṇa then fed all His boyfriends with butter and yogurt out of cups made from the leaves of the surrounding *kadamba* trees.

The temple of Doka Daujī on top of Govardhana Hill, under the tree on the left is the Mukut-śilā

38. Doka Daujī (Balarāma Sthali)

The Balarāma Mukut-śilā

This temple is dedicated to Lord Balarāma who is also known as Daujī (elder brother). In this temple the Deity of Balarāma in the form of a Govardhana-śilā. The word *doka* is a corruption of the word *dekha* which means looking. There is a nice story concerning this unusual Deity.

One day Lord Balarāma was roaming on top of Govardhana Hill when suddenly He saw Lord Kṛṣṇa in the far distance at Candra-sarovara, enjoying the *rāsa-līlā* with the *gopīs*. Crouching, Lord Balarāma became completely absorbed in watching the beautiful bodily movements of Kṛṣṇa as He danced in ecstasy with the *gopīs* of Vraja. Because Lord Balarāma was intently looking at Kṛṣṇa (dekha), this Deity became known as Doka Daujī.

The temple can be seen from both sides of Govardhana Hill, which is very narrow at this point. Govardhana Hill is imagined to be in the form of a peacock and this temple of Doka Daujī is the beginning of the peacock's tail. Following in the footsteps of Lord Caitanya, Gauḍiya *Vaiṣṇavas* do not step on Govardhana Hill but simply pay obeisances to Doka Daujī from a distance. To the left of the path that leads up to Doka Daujī one can see the impression of Lord Balarāma's crown (*mukut*) on a rock known as the Balarāma Mukut-śilā.

39. Apsarā Vana

This forest known as Apsarā Vana surrounds the tip of Govardhana Hill on the eastern side. It is still very much visible and one can get a wonderful view of it as well as the tail end of Govardhana Hill from the roof of the Narasingh Mandīra at Apsarā-kuṇḍa.

Apsara Vana surrounds the tail-end of Govardhana Hill

The beautiful Apsarā-kuṇḍa in the late afternoon

Another view of Apsarā-kuṇḍa

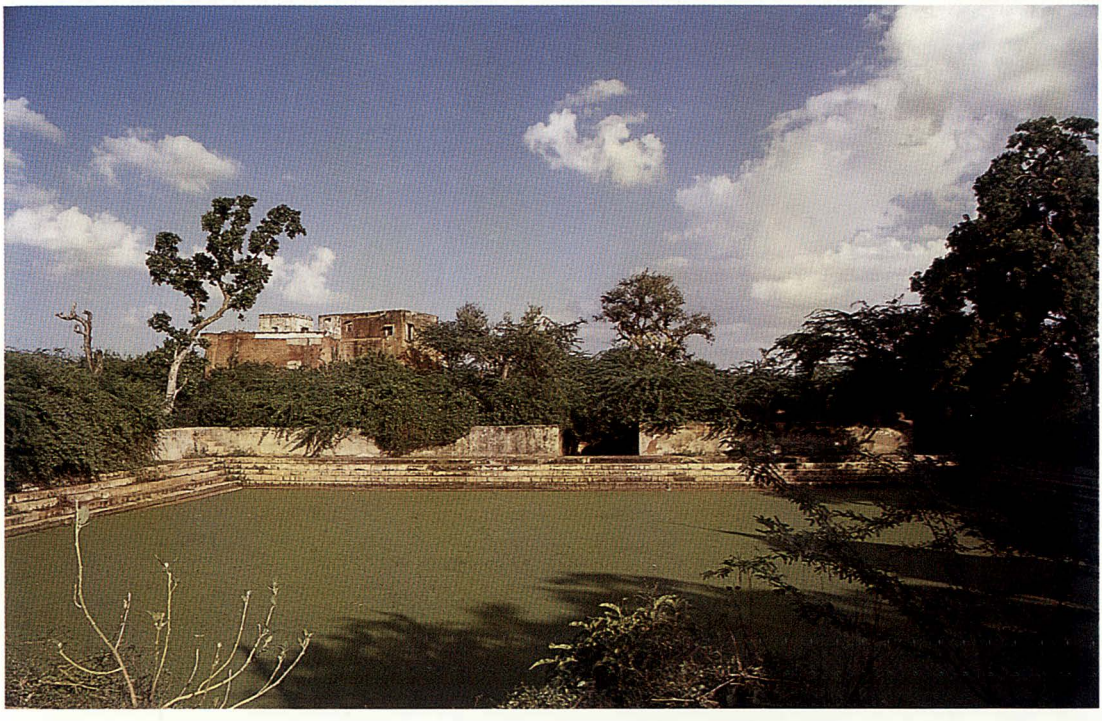
40. Apsarā-kuṇḍa

This *kuṇḍa* is situated at the southernmost tip of Govardhana Hill. When the denizens of heaven, headed by Brahmā, came to perform the *abhiṣeka* of Lord Kṛṣṇa, it is said that one hundred and eight *kuṇḍa*s were created by the water used in the bathing ceremony. Apsarā-kuṇḍa was created when the seven main Apsarās [heavenly dancing girls] came to perform their *abhiṣeka* of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

It is also mentioned in the *Viṣṇu-dharmottara* that the twenty-four main incarnations of Lord Viṣṇu, including Matsya, Kūrma, Varāha and Vāmana, eternally perform pastimes on the banks of this sacred *kuṇḍa*. Lord Kṛṣṇa used to come here and for the pleasure of His boyfriends He would manifest one or the other of these forms and enjoy pastimes. Once He manifested a twelve-armed form of Viṣṇu in front of the *gopī*s and a cowherd boy took the form of Garuḍa. On other occasions Kṛṣṇa manifested the form of Varāha and started to dig up the earth. He also manifested the form of Lord Rāmacandra and the cowherd boys manifested the forms of monkeys and bears to assist Him. It was also on the sacred banks of Apsarā-kuṇḍa that Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa enjoyed Their spring season *rāsa* dancing.

41. Naval-kuṇḍa (Punchari Kuṇḍa)

Naval means ever-youthful or ever-fresh. Once when Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa were enjoying the *rāsa* dance on the banks of this *kuṇḍa*, They became so much absorbed in the ecstasy of Their union that They simply melted into the waters of these two *kuṇḍa*s. Rādhā and the *gopī*s melted



Naval-kuṇḍa with the fort-like temple of Lord Narasiṁha Deva behind

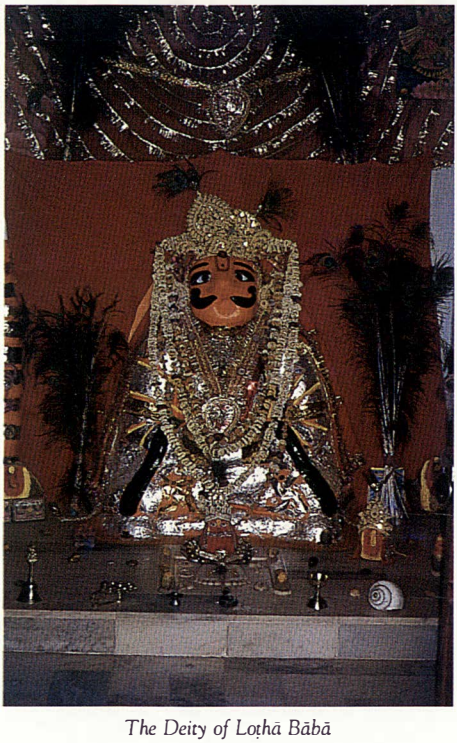
into Apsarā-kuṇḍa and Kṛṣṇa the ever-fresh (*naval*) youth, melted into Naval-kuṇḍa. This *kuṇḍa* is also known as Punchari-kuṇḍa because it is situated near the tail (*punch*) of Govardhana Hill.

42. Narasiṁha Mandira

Situated on a small hill near the banks of Naval-kuṇḍa is a temple of Lord Narasiṁha Deva. It is believed that the Deity is over one thousand years old. This beautiful Deity of Lord Narasiṁha is made of black stone. Upon request, the old *pūjārī* may lift the Deity's dress to reveal Hiranyakasipu being ripped apart on the lap of Narasiṁha. Prahlāda can also be seen standing nearby. From the roof of this fort-like temple one can have a wonderful panoramic view of both Naval-kuṇḍa and Apsarā-kuṇḍa, Govardhana Hill and Apsarā Vana. In the far distance one can see the Gopāla temple at Aniyora.

The Deity of Lord Narasiṁha Deva

A peacock crosses the parikrama path



The Deity of Loṭhā Bābā

43. Punchari-ka-Loṭhā Bābā Mandīra

This small temple is said to be dedicated to one of Kṛṣṇa's cowherd boyfriends whose name is Loṭhā. This temple in the village of Punchari, is known locally as the Punchari-ka-loṭhā Bābā Temple, due to being located at the tail-end (punch) of Govardhana Hill.

The Deity can be seen in a sitting position and is said to be waiting for his dear friend Kṛṣṇa to return. One day Loṭhā had cooked some nice food preparations for his dear friends Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma. All of a sudden he saw then leaving for Mathurā on Akrura's chariot. He immediately asked Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma when They would be returning because he had cooked some nice food preparations especially for Them.

Kṛṣṇa informed Loṭhā that He would be returning the day after next. Loṭhā then told Kṛṣṇa and Balarama that he would not eat or drink anything but sit down and wait at this spot until they returned.

To this day, Loṭhā is still sitting at this same spot, facing the road, waiting for his friends Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma to return.

At first glance the deity looks like Hanumān who is always covered in red 'gulal'. Hanumān is also known as 'Lautera Hanumān and in fact, Punchari-ka-loṭhā Bābā is considered by Vrajavasis to be non-different from Hanumānjī. This temple is very popular with the *Vrajavāsīs*, who come here in large numbers to sing *bhajans*, accompanied with *dholak* and *karatalas*. *Vrajavāsīs* pray to this deity to give them strength to perform the *parikramā* of Govardhana Hill.

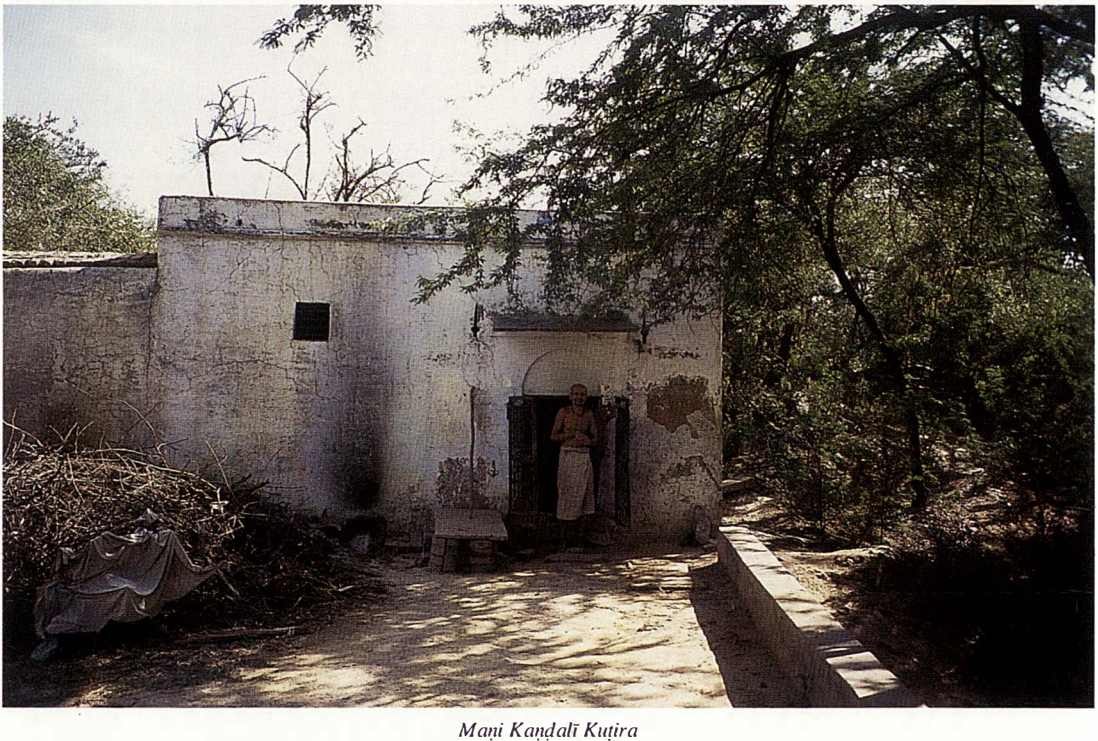
Monkeys near Sutala Vana

44. Sutala Vana

This Sutala Vana is believed to be one of the places on the banks of Apsarā-kuṇḍa where the *rāsa-līlā* took place. In this small forest there used to be many pairs of *kadamba* and *tamāla* trees. It is believed that the *tamāla* trees represent Kṛṣṇa, whilst the *kadamba* trees represent Rādhārāṇi and the *gopīs*. There is a sacred *kuṇḍa* near Maṇi kaṇḍali cave known as Sutala-kuṇḍa.

Near the banks of Apsarā-kuṇḍa is Sutala Vana

The secluded Sutala-kuṇḍa where peacocks like to drink water



Maṇi Kaṇḍalī Kuṭira

45. Maṇi Kaṇḍalī Cave
(Rāghava Paṇḍit's Bhajāna Kuṭira)

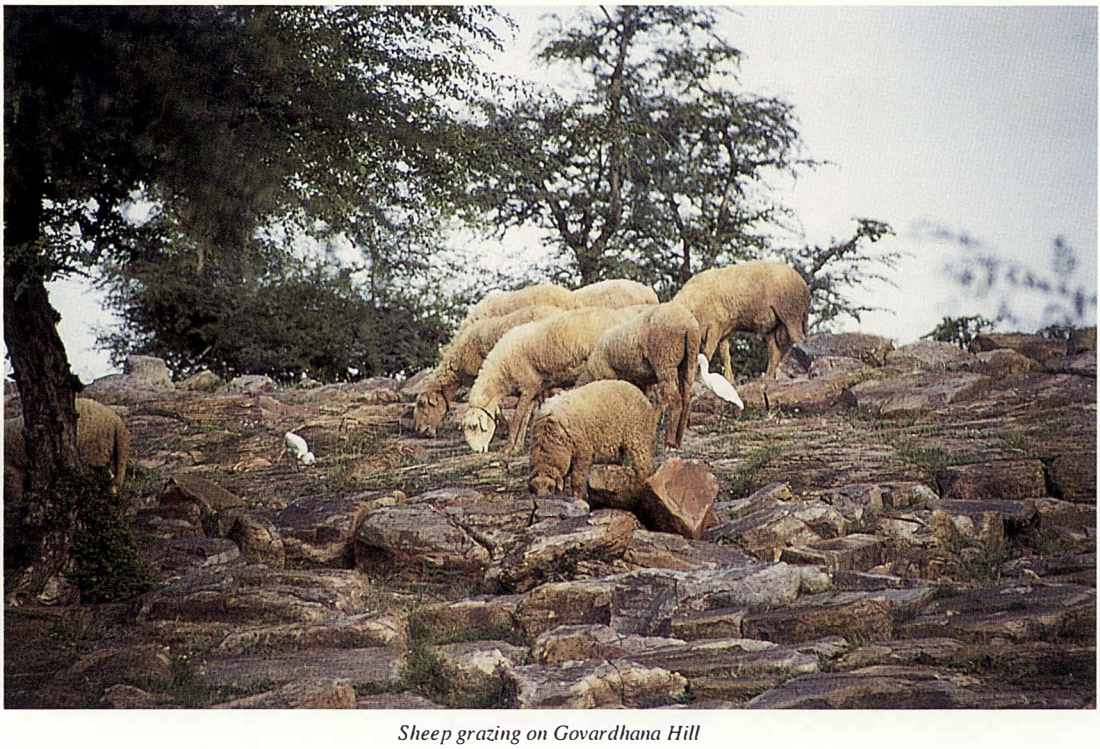
This is the famous cave where Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa used to enjoy intimate loving pastimes together. A *kuṭira* has now been built around it. This same cave was used by Rāghava Paṇḍita Gosvāmī as his *bhajana kuṭira*. It is mentioned in the book *Bhakti-ratnākara* that Rāghava Paṇḍita Gosvāmī guided Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura and Śrīnivas Ācārya on a tour of Vraja including *parikramā* of Govardhana Hill.

It has been described that Rāghava Gosvāmī's body was grayish because it was always covered with the dust of Vraja. A close friend of Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī, Raghava Paṇḍita Gosvāmī always lived at Govardhana. He took great pleasure in meeting all of Lord Caitanya's followers from Bengal and showing them the holy places of Vraja Maṇḍala. According to *Gaura-gaṇodeśa-dīpikā*, Rāghava Paṇḍita was one of the eight *sakhīs* or girlfriends of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī known as Campakalatā.

The cave at Maṇi Kaṇḍalī

A cow grazing in the forest surrounded by Egrets

Cow resting at Govardhana



Sheep grazing on Govardhana Hill

A pūjārī points to Airāvata's foot-print

46. Airāvata's Foot-print

At this place can be seen the foot-print of Airāvata, the white elephant carrier of Lord Indra. This is where Airāvata bowed down to offer obeisances to Lord Kṛṣṇa, leaving his footprint impressed upon a rock on the side of Govardhana Hill.

47. Indra Pūjā

This is believed to be the spot near Airāvata's foot-print, where Indra offered his obeisances to Kṛṣṇa. The Lord was walking on Govardhana Hill inspecting the damage caused to Vṛndāvana by Indra's torrents of rain. On seeing Kṛṣṇa, Indra fell down at His lotus feet and offered his obeisances while shedding torrents of tears from his thousands of eyes. According to Vallabhācārya, Indra also offered 56 of the most wonderful and opulent milk sweet preparations (*cappan bhoga*) to Kṛṣṇa in order to please Him. From here one can also see the temple of Doka Daujī and realize just how narrow Govardhana Hill is at this point.

Indra Pūjā — where Lord Indra offered his obeisances

Indra-kuṇḍa

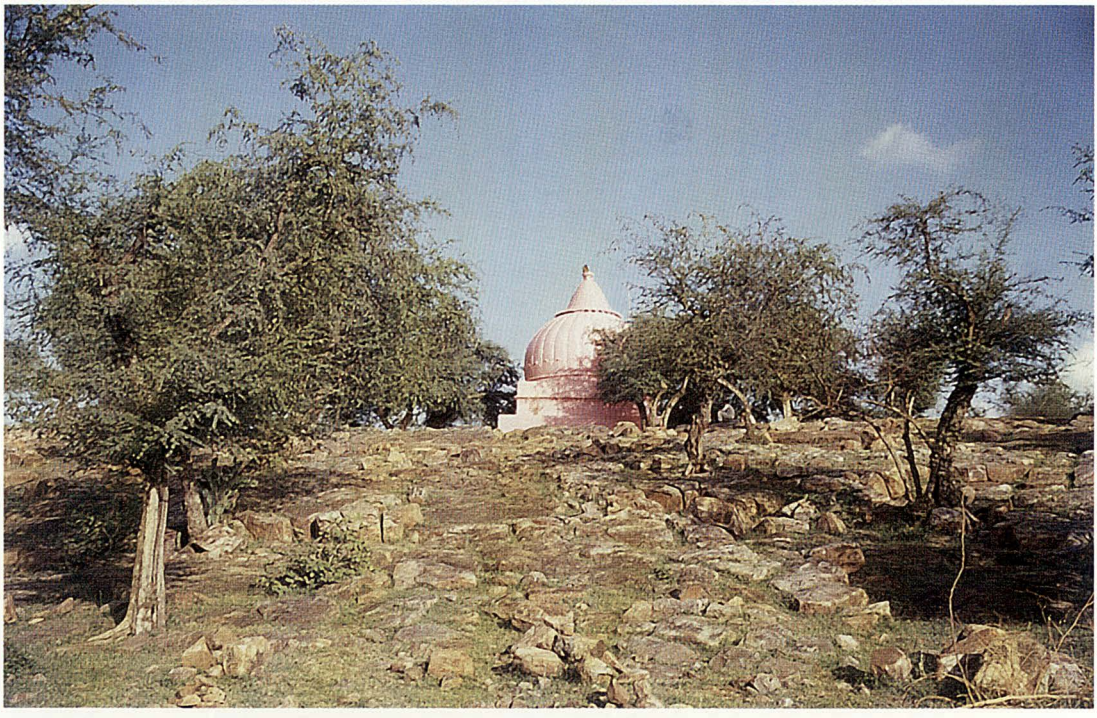
48. Indra-kuṇḍa (Carana-kuṇḍa)

Although practically invisible unless filled with heavy monsoon rains, there is a *kuṇḍa* here known as Indra-kuṇḍa. When Indra offered his humble obeisances and prayers to Lord Kṛṣṇa, torrents of tears fell from his thousands of eyes and washed the lotus feet (*carana*) of the Lord. These tears then formed Indra-kuṇḍa. It is believed that Lord Caitanya rested here while doing *parikramā* of Govardhana Hill.

49. Kadamba Vana

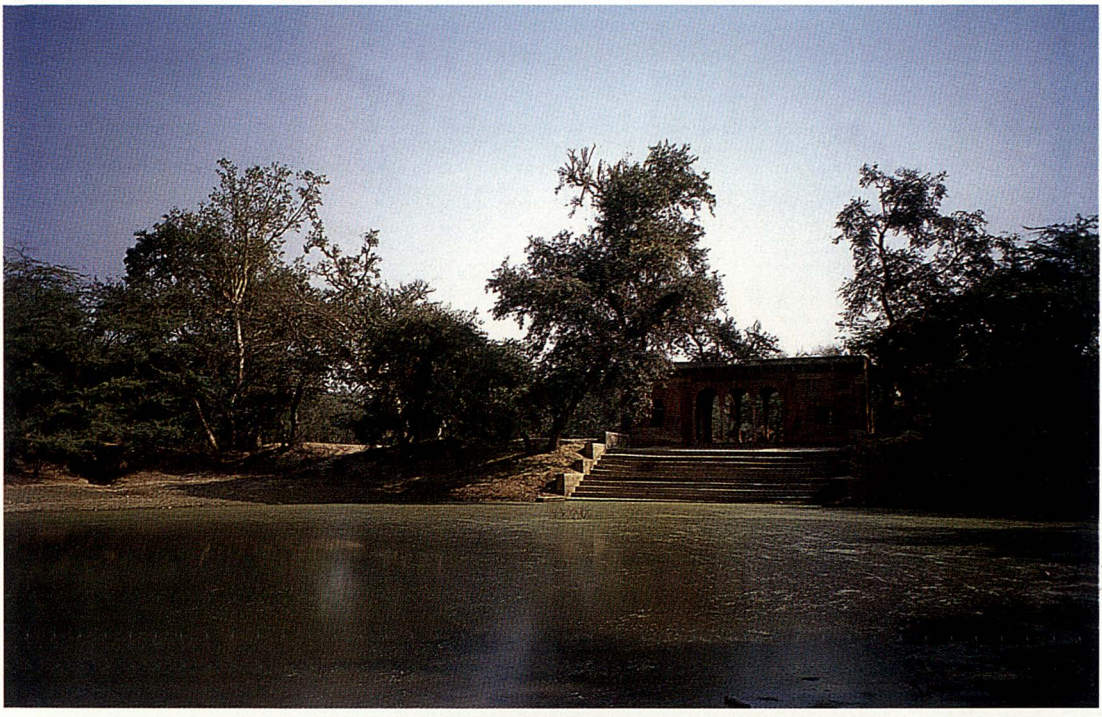
This forest of *kadamba* trees was the scene of many loving pastimes between Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. The *kadamba* tree is very dear to Kṛṣṇa because its yellow flowers remind Him of Rādhārāṇī's transcendental bodily complexion. Also situated in this forest are Surabhi-kuṇḍa, Indra-kuṇḍa and Airāvata-kuṇḍa. Unfortunately at the present time, most of the *kadamba* trees have disappeared.

Cows and buffaloes grazing in Kadamba Vana



The temple of Doka Daujī can be seen from both sides of Govardhana Hill

The parikramā path going through Kadamba Vana



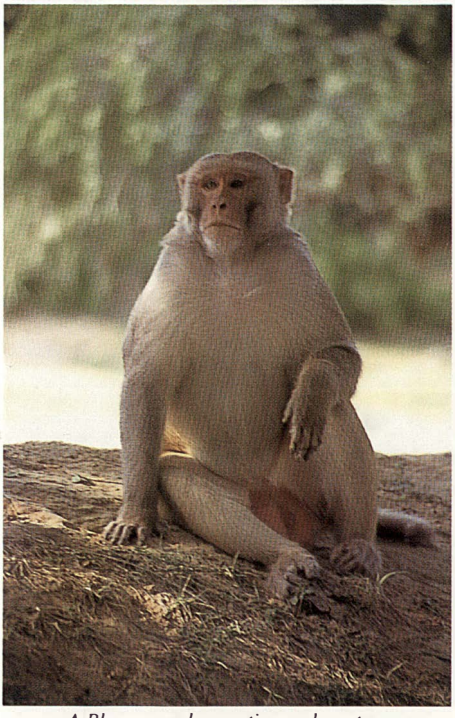
Surabhi-kuṇḍa

50. Surabhi-kuṇḍa

Blackwinged Stilts at Surabhi-kuṇḍa

At this place Surabhi, the transcendental wish-fulfilling cow (*kāmadhenu*), offered beautiful prayers to Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa and asked Him to forgive Indra for his offenses.

After Indra had witnessed the great exhibition of Lord Kṛṣṇa's mystic power — lifting Govardhana Hill just like an umbrella and protecting the inhabitants of Vraja from incessant rains — Indra became demoralized. In a dejected mood he returned to his palace but was unable to attend to his duties and did not even speak to his wife. The news of Indra's despondency soon reached the ears of Bṛhaspati, the spiritual master of the demigods. Bṛhaspati arrived at the palace and informed Indra that he had greatly offended the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who was enjoying His pastimes in the form of a cowherd boy in Vṛndāvana.



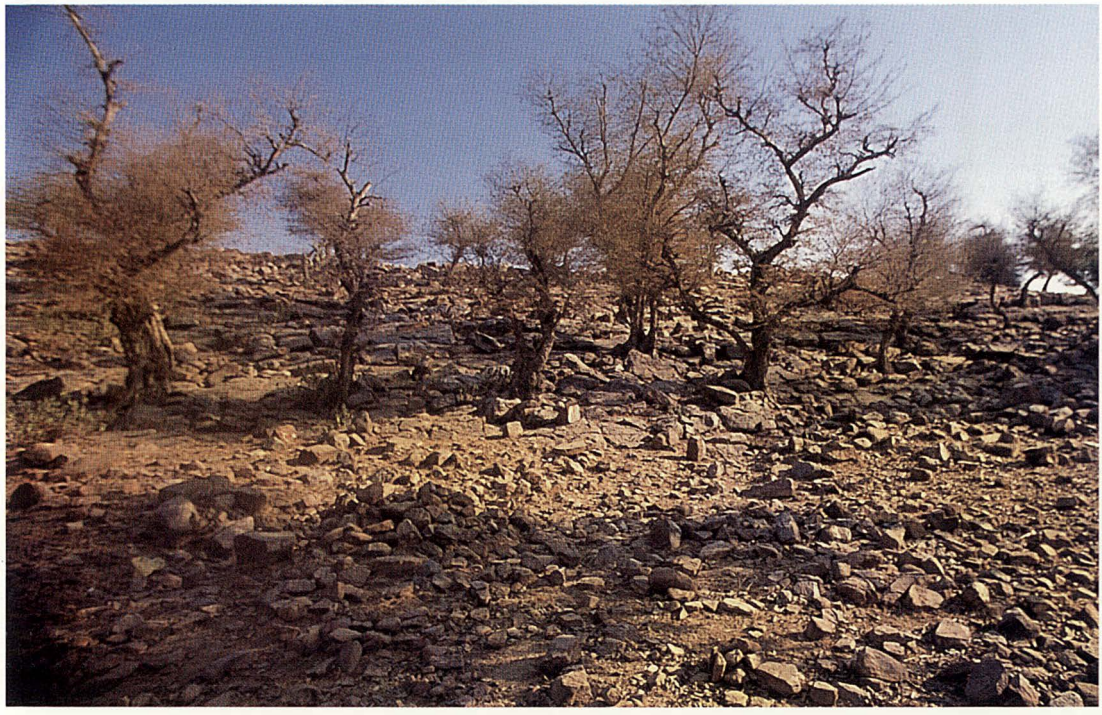
A Rhesus monkey resting under a tree

Bṛhaspati advised Indra to speak to Lord Brahmā, who was qualified to guide him on how to counteract his offenses. Brahmā in turn advised Indra to seek the help of Surabhi, the mother of all cows, because cows are very dear to Lord Kṛṣṇa. Surabhi agreed to help Indra and together they came to Govardhana in search of Lord Kṛṣṇa. On seeing Kṛṣṇa walking on Govardhana Hill Surabhi came forward and humbly requested the Lord to forgive the foolish Indra, who was engrossed in passion and ignorance. On hearing the fervent plea of His great devotee Surabhi Mātā, Kṛṣṇa's heart melted and He agreed to forgive Indra his offenses.

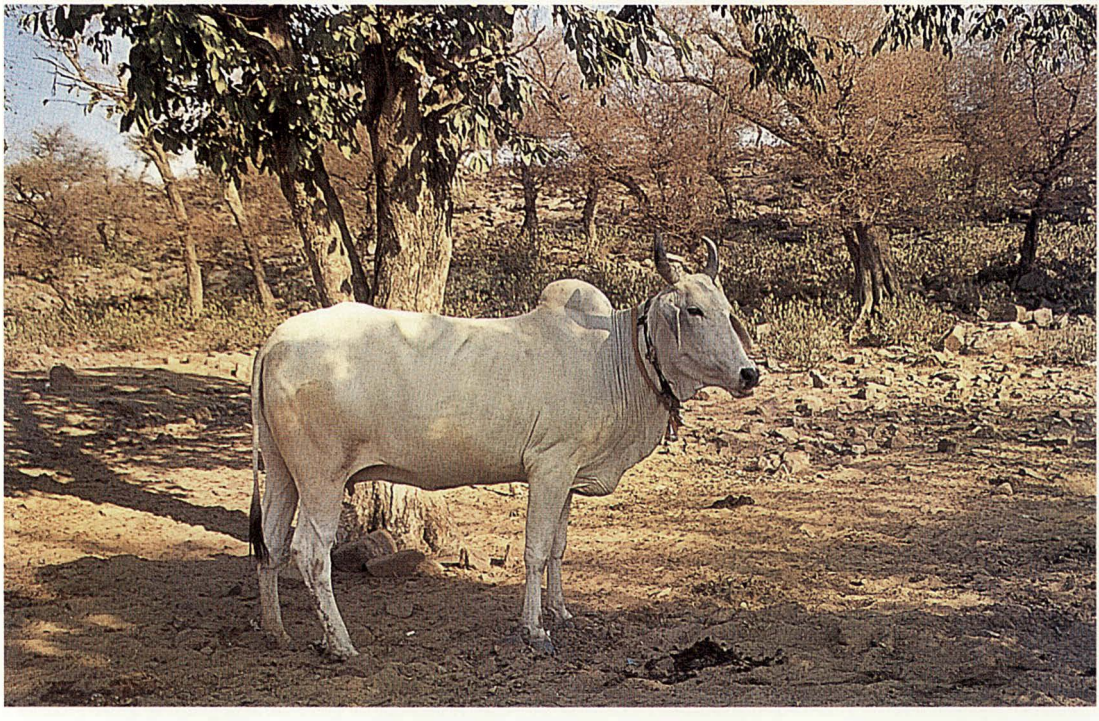
51. Airāvata-kuṇḍa

This *kuṇḍa* was formed when Indra's elephant carrier, Airāvata, brought the water of the Gaṅgā from heaven and stored it here ready for the bathing ceremony of Lord Kṛṣṇa at Govinda-kuṇḍa.

Airāvata-kuṇḍa—where Indra's elephant carrier Airāvata stored water from the Gaṅgā



Govardhana Hill near Airāvata-kuṇḍa



A cow stands in the shade near Airāvata-kuṇḍa

Cows relax in the shade at the foot of Govardhana Hill

Rudan-kuṇḍa

Hariju-kuṇḍa

52. Rudan-kuṇḍa (Rudra-kuṇḍa)

Rudan means tears. This beautiful *kuṇḍa* was created when Lord Śiva, feeling ecstatic love for Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, shed so many tears that a *kuṇḍa* was formed. Surrounding Rudan-kuṇḍa is a large lake which becomes very full during the monsoon. This lake, named after one of Kṛṣṇa's friends, is called Hariju-kuṇḍa.

Once when the *gopīs* were feeling intense separation from Kṛṣṇa they all came here and sitting on the banks of this *kuṇḍa* they shed unlimited tears of love. It is also said that this is one of the *kuṇḍas* where Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa enjoy bathing. On the banks of Rudan-kuṇḍa is a temple of Śiva known as Bole Bābā Mandira. This kuṇḍa is also sometimes known as Rudra-kuṇḍa.

53. Jetipura

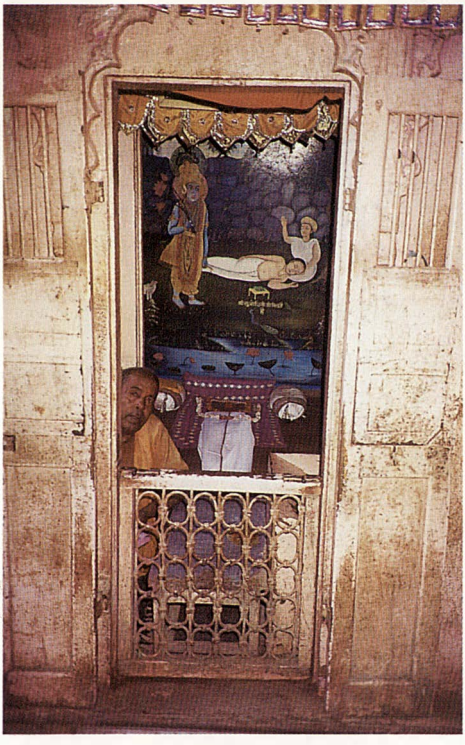
The word *jeti* is a corruption of the word *yati*, which means a *sannyāsi*. *Pura* means town or village. Jetipura was named after Śrīla Mādhavendra Purī, who stayed here during the time he was worshiping the Gopāla Deity. The temple of Gopālajī is situated right on top of Govardhana Hill and on the other side is the village of Aniyora.

It was also here at Jetipura that Viṭṭhalanātha stayed after he was appointed head priest of Lord Gopāla Rāja by Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī. The *samādhi* of Viṭṭhalanātha and his father's (Vallabhācārya), sitting place are also here.

Ladies worshiping Lord Siva at the Bole Bābā Mandīra next to Rudan-kuṇḍa

Samadhis at Jetipura

The Mukharāvinda-śilā (left) and the samdhi of Viṭṭhalanātha (right)



Vallabhācārya's Baithaka

54. Mukharāvinda Śilā

Here is another Mukharāvinda, or lotus mouth of Govardhana. This particular Mukharāvinda is accepted by the Vallabha sampradāya who manage the temple of Gopālajī. The same *sampradāya* is also looking after the original Gopāla Deity now known as Śrī Nāthajī at Nāthdwāra in Rājasthan.

The Mukharāvinda accepted by the Gauḍiya *Vaiṣṇavas* is at Mānasī-gaṅgā and is confirmed by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī to be the real one.

It would seem that even though the followers of Lord Caitanya do not step on Govardhana Hill, Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī allowed the priests of Gopālajī to climb on top of Govardhana Hill to serve the Deity. It would further appear that in order to reciprocate the mood of Lord Caitanya, Lord Gopālajī came down from Govardhana Hill and moved to Nāthadwāra, so that future generations of Gauḍiya Vaiṣṇavas could have His *darśana* without having to climb Govardhana Hill.

The Daṇḍavata-śilā

55. Viṭṭhalanātha Samādhi

Situated in the same compound as the Mukharāvinda Śilā is the *samādhi* of Viṭṭhalanātha, who was the eldest son of Vallabhācārya. Viṭṭhalanātha was appointed as the head priest of the Gopāla Deity by Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī. It is believed Viṭṭhalanātha was born in the year 1515 and entered *samādhi* in 1585.

56. Vallabhācārya's Baithaka (Sitting Place)

This is the sitting place of Vallabhācārya whose former name was Vallabha Bhaṭṭa. He was an associate of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu and met the Lord at Purī as well as at Prayāg. The *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* gives an account of how Lord Caitanya took his meal at the Prayāg home of Vallabha. Vallabhācārya spent a lot of time in Vraja and became the founder of the Vallabhācārya *sampradāya* of *Vaiṣṇavas*.

57. Daṇḍavata Śilā

It is said that anyone who circumambulates this Govardhana-śilā seven times and offers full *daṇḍavats* will be relieved of all offenses that may have been inadvertently committed while doing Govardhana *parikramā*. It is also said that the priests who serve in the temples on top of Govardhana Hill also come here to rid themselves of any offenses they may have committed for having climbed on the sacred hill.

Govardhana Hill after Jetipura

The calm and peaceful Vilachu-kuṇḍa is a haven for water-birds

Egrets and a Pheasant-tailed Jacana at Vilachu-kuṇḍa

Indian Morhen

58. VILACHU-KUṆḌA

This *kuṇḍa* used to be surrounded by a forest known as Vilāsa Vana which was one of the places where Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa performed Their transcendental pastimes. There used to be a stone seat on the southern bank of this *kuṇḍa* where the Divine Couple sat and enjoyed sweet conversations between Themselves.

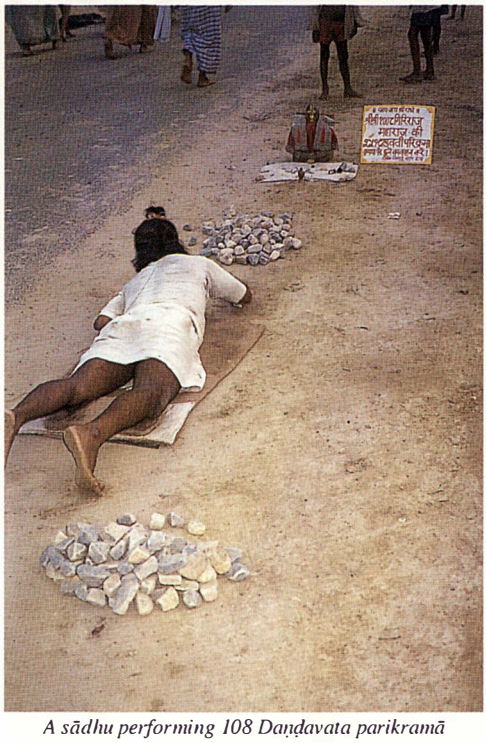
Once Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī lost Her ankle-bell here. She was searching for it when Kṛṣṇa suddenly appeared and asked Her, in a joking mood, if She was looking for His flute that had been lost. Rādhārāṇī asked Kṛṣṇa not to joke but to help find the lost anklet. Kṛṣṇa persisted in joking around and Rādhārāṇī became angry. In order to pacify Her, Kṛṣṇa started to dig up the earth with His bare hands. To Rādhārāṇī's amazement He dug up all types of ankle-bells, some gold, some silver, besides all kinds of priceless gems. Kṛṣṇa then smiled and asked Rādhārāṇī which one belonged to Her. Feeling great happiness Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa then embraced one another.

It is said that the Harideva Deity near Manasī-gaṅgā was hidden in this *kuṇḍa* during the attack on Vṛndāvana by the Moham-medan soldiers. Later, He was moved to Rasadhan near Kanpur.

Cormorant in a treetop

A white-breasted Kingfisher

A view of Govardhana Hill near Vilachu-kuṇḍa



A sādhu performing 108 Daṇḍavata parikramā

Rājasthani villagers performing parikramā

Sakhī-kuṇḍa with Sakhi Sthali in the background

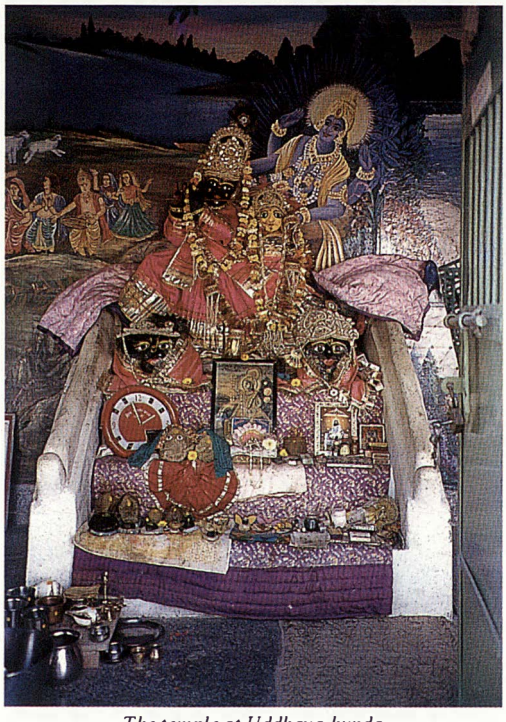
59. Sakhī Sthali

At this place there used to be a forest known as Sakhī Vana, and within that forest was the village of Sakhī Sthali where Candrāvalī used to live along with her sixty-four *sakhīs* or girlfriends. Within this village was a *kuṇḍa* known as Līlāvati-kuṇḍa (Sakhī-kuṇḍa), which was dug by the girlfriends of Candrāvalī. Even though this *kuṇḍa* has been neglected over the years, it is still visible.

Candrāvalī was married to Govardhana Malla, a close friend of Abhimanyu, Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī's husband. Candrāvalī's father was Candrabhanu, the brother of Rādhārāṇī's father Vṛṣabhanu, thus making Candrāvalī and Rādhārāṇī cousins. There is always a transcendental competition going on between Rādhārāṇī and Candrāvalī to gain Kṛṣṇa's attention. Out of all the thousands of *gopīs*, eight, known as the Aṣṭa-sakhīs, are prominent. Out of these eight *sakhīs*, two are most prominent, Rādhārāṇī and Candrāvalī; and out of them Rādhārāṇī is the most prominent and dearly beloved by Kṛṣṇa. Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī has explained that Candrāvalī expands herself to become Rukmiṇī in the Dvārakā līlā, and the *gopī* friends of Candrāvalī expand themselves to become the queens headed by Rukmiṇī.

A chipmunk on a Sila

Uddhava-kuṇḍa



The temple at Uddhava-kuṇḍa

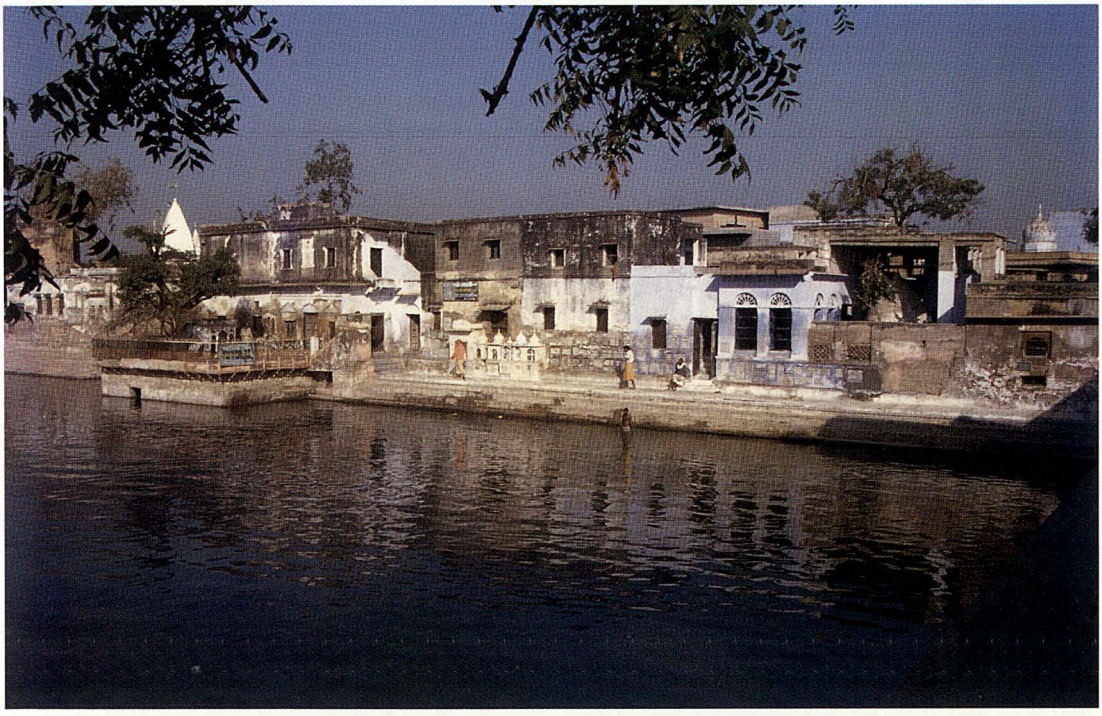
60. Uddhava-kuṇḍa

This beautiful *kuṇḍa* is dedicated to Uddhava, Kṛṣṇa's dearmost friend, who lives at Kusuma-sarovara in the form of creepers (gulma lata).

When Uddhava came to Vṛndāvana as a messenger of Kṛṣṇa, he was so moved by the pure unalloyed devotion of the *gopīs* that he wanted to smear the dust of their feet on his head.

This sacred *kuṇḍa* is only a few hundred meters from Kusuma-sarovara, which was formerly situated on the other side of Govardhana Hill. Now Govardhana Hill has sunk into the ground at this place and is no longer visible.

On the left side of the building is a path that leads down to the *kuṇḍa*, where a small temple with Deities of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa can be found. The Deities are believed to have been installed five thousand years ago by Vajranābha, Lord Kṛṣṇa's great-grandson.



Ma Jahnava's Baithaka (left) and Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī's samadhi at Rādhā-kuṇḍa

61. Rādhā-kuṇḍa and Śyāma-kuṇḍa

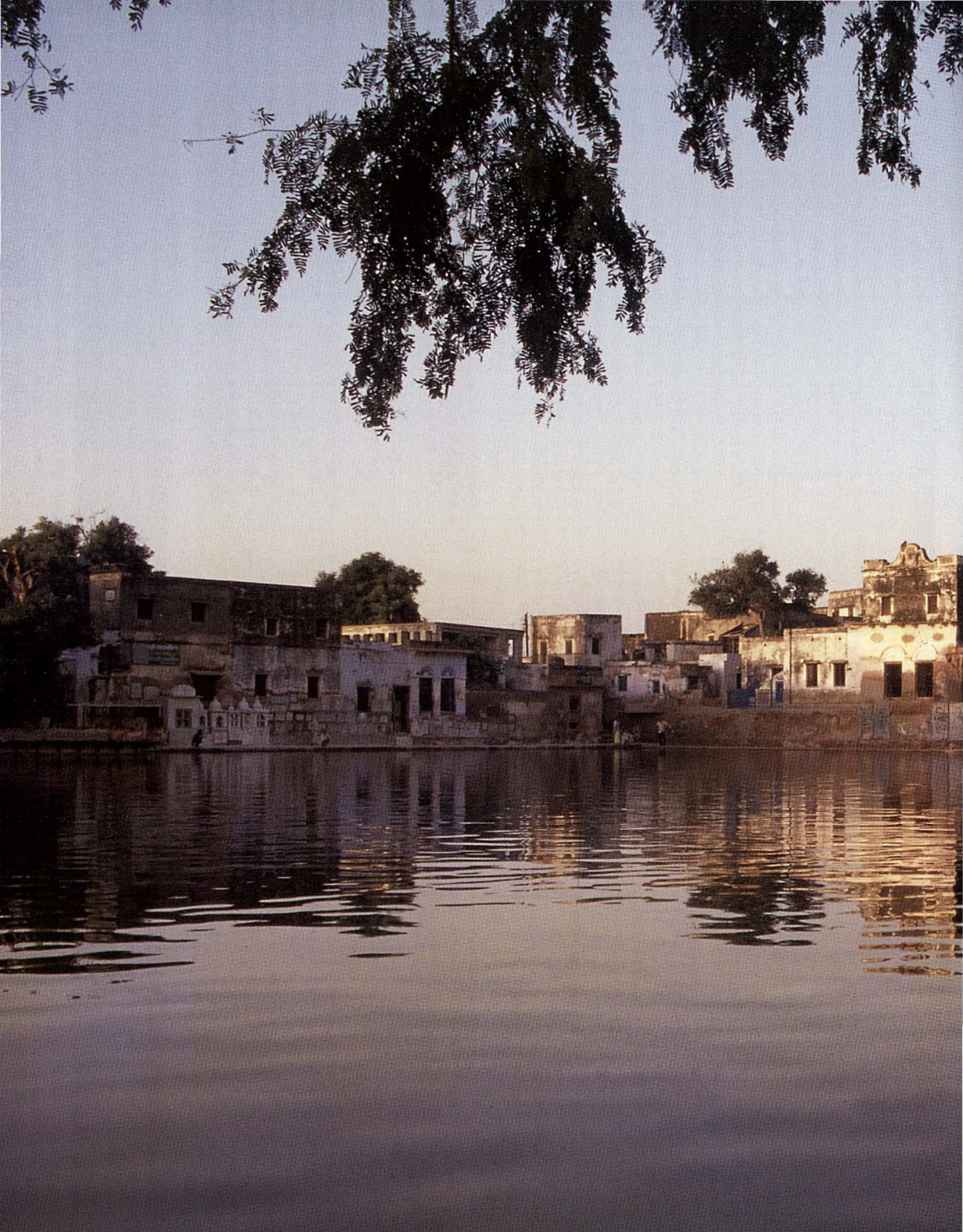
This attractive place is surrounded by various kinds of trees*—kadambas, *rows of* campakas, *excellent new* aśokas, *numerous mango trees,* punnagas, bakulas *and by* lavaṅga *and* mālatī *creepers. It is the best of places, where the two ponds beloved to Rādhā and Mādhava meet along one edge. May I find shelter here, the favorite location of the two lovers' pleasure pastimes.

Vraja-vilās-stava 52

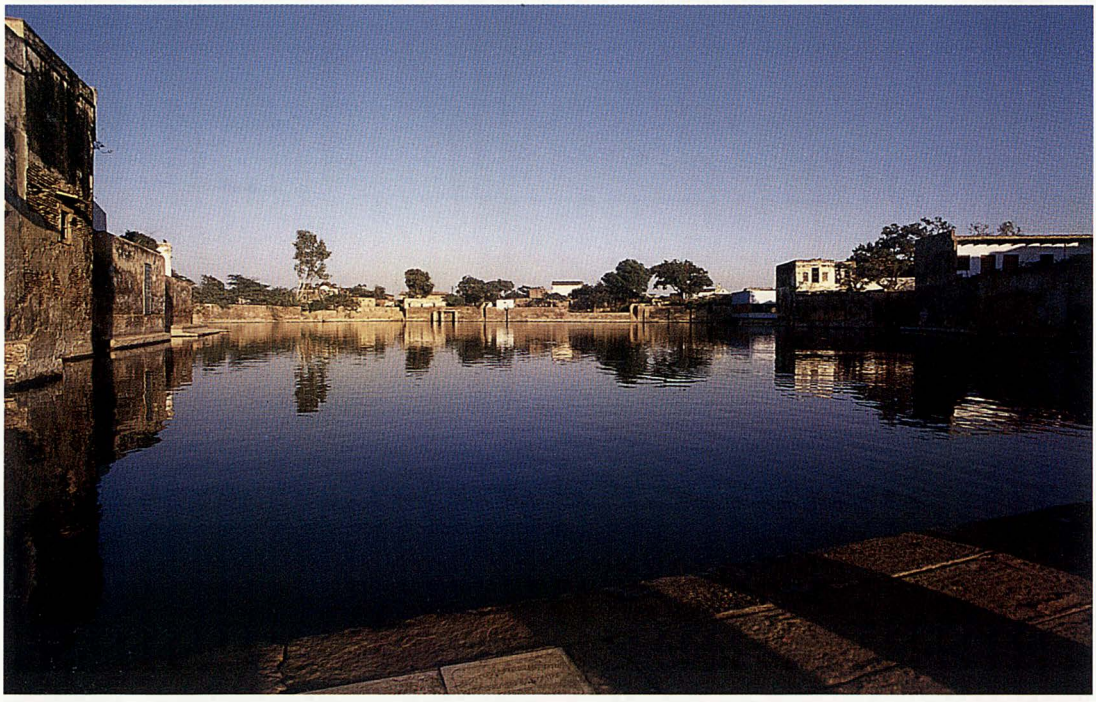
Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī

Rādhā-kuṇḍa is the personal bathing place of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. It is revered as the holiest of all holy places in the universe and considered the liquid form (*prema svarūpa*) of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, and therefore nondifferent from Her. It can be concluded that to have *darśana* of Rādhā-kuṇḍa is exactly the same as having *darśana* of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī Herself.

It is said that Rādhā-kuṇḍa is the most favorite place of Rādhārāṇī, because it is here, in the groves surrounding Her sacred bathing pool, that She enjoys the most intimate loving exchanges with Śrī Kṛṣṇa. It is therefore no wonder that Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī has said that anyone who serves Rādhā-kuṇḍa will get the opportunity to become an assistant of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī under the guidance of the *gopīs*. Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī has mentioned that anyone who bathes in the sacred waters of Rādhā-kuṇḍa, even once in his life, will be blessed by Lord Kṛṣṇa to achieve the same mood of ecstatic love as that of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī.



Rādhā-kuṇḍa —revered as the most sacred of all holy places in the universe



The beautiful Syama-kuṇḍa in the late afternoon

To be able to reside on the banks of Rādhā-kuṇḍa and to bathe in the sacred waters of Rādhārāṇī's own personal bathing pool are not ordinary activities. Even Nārada, Sāunaka Ṛṣi, Lord Brahmā, Śukadeva Gosvāmī and Lord Śiva do not get this chance. This is because they are in the consciousness of being male devotees. In order to actually enter into Rādhā-kuṇḍa, one must be above the bodily concept and completely free from all offenses. Only then can one achieve the full benefit of bathing in Rādhā-kuṇḍa.

Once, when Śrīla Prabhupāda heard that some devotees were frivolously splashing about in the sacred waters of Rādhā-kuṇḍa, he became very upset. He condemned those who foolishly jumped over Rādhā-kuṇḍa and kicked Her with their feet. Śrīla Prabhupāda said that one should never touch Rādhārāṇī with one's feet and that Rādhā-kuṇḍa and Rādhārāṇī are nondifferent. He then told the devotees that they should only sprinkle three drops of water on their heads as this was as good as bathing, but at the same time, showing proper respect to Rādhā-kuṇḍa. Some of the residents of Rādhā-kuṇḍa can be seen sitting by the water's edge and using a *loṭā* to take bath by scooping water from Rādhā-kuṇḍa and pouring it over themselves, not daring to touch the sacred kuṇḍa with their feet.

Anyone who wishes to reside on the banks of Rādhā-kuṇḍa and bathe in Her sacred waters should exemplify the mood and activities of Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī, who is the guide and *ācārya* for all those who reside on the banks of Rādhā-kuṇḍa. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī once said that there are many so-called *bābājīs* who think that they are living at Rādhā-kuṇḍa but who in fact, because of their grievous offenses, are living at Nāraka-kuṇḍa (hell).

There is a nice story about the appearance of Rādhā-kuṇḍa. After Lord Kṛṣṇa had killed the demon in the shape of a huge bull named Ariṣṭāsura, He came to this spot to enjoy pastimes with Rādhārāṇī. On seeing Kṛṣṇa approaching, Rādhārāṇī forbade Him to come near Her unless He purified Himself from the sin of killing a bull.

Even though Kṛṣṇa pleaded that this bull was actually a demon in the form of a bull, Rādhārāṇī would not hear about it and told Kṛṣṇa that He should bathe in all the holy rivers of the three worlds. Rather than leave Vraja, Kṛṣṇa called all the holy rivers and, striking His foot into the ground, created a deep hole. He then ordered the sacred rivers to empty their waters there and fill up the hole, which then became known as Śyāma-kuṇḍa.

Kṛṣṇa then took His bath in Śyāma-kuṇḍa and immediately started boasting in front of Rādhārāṇī about how great He was in creating such a beautiful *kuṇḍa*. Not wishing to let Kṛṣṇa get the better of Her, Rādhārāṇī immediately broke one of Her bangles and started to dig in the earth. On seeing this, the *gopīs* also broke their bangles and began helping Rādhārāṇī to dig. Within a short time a large hole was created. Rādhārāṇī and the *gopīs* were going to bring water from Mānasī-gaṅgā in clay pots to fill up the *kuṇḍa* when the sacred rivers approached Her and prayed to be able to fill Her *kuṇḍa* also. Rādhārāṇī agreed. The sacred rivers then broke through the banks of Śyāma-kuṇḍa and filled Her *kuṇḍa*, which then became known as Rādhā-kuṇḍa.

Kṛṣṇa immediately took His bath in Rādhā-kuṇḍa, declaring that anyone who bathes here will develop love for Him on the same level as Rādhārāṇī's love. Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī then took bath at Śyāma-kuṇḍa and declared that anyone who bathes in Śyāma-kuṇḍa will develop love for Her on the same level as Kṛṣṇa's love.

62. Raghunātha dāsa Samādhi

This is the samādhi of Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī who was affectionately known to all the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas as Dāsa Gosvāmī, he was one of the most intimate, as well as important followers of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Raghunātha dāsa was born in Bengal in the year 1494, as the sone of a very wealthy landowner. During his youth he heard about the glories of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu and his only desire was to join the Lord and serve His lotus feet.

Even though Raghunātha dāsa came from a very wealthy family, he had absolutely no interest in material affairs whatsoever. Much to the consternation of his loving parents, Raghunātha dāsa was ran away from home to join Lord Caitanya in Jagannātha Purī. While he was living at Jagannātha Purī, Lord Caitanya placed Raghunātha under the care of Swarūpa Dāmodara Gosvāmī, the Lord's principle secretary. Raghunātha dāsa was the embodiment of renunciation and ate enough

Rāghunātha dāsa Samādhi

to keep his body and soul together. It is said that his strict regulative principles were exactly like lines etched in stone, as such lines can never be erased. After the disappearance of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu in 1534, Raghunātha travelled to Vṛndāvana where he stayed at Rādhā-kuṇḍa.

In the year 1583, after almost forty eight years of performing bhajana Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī entered samādhi. In those days of the repressive Mogul rule, it was decided to burn the sacred body of Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī, so that the Muslim fanatics could not at some time in the future, dig up his sacred body and desecrate it. Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī personally performed the last rites and had the sacred ashes of Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī placed in samādhi here at this spot on the banks of Rādhā-kuṇḍa.

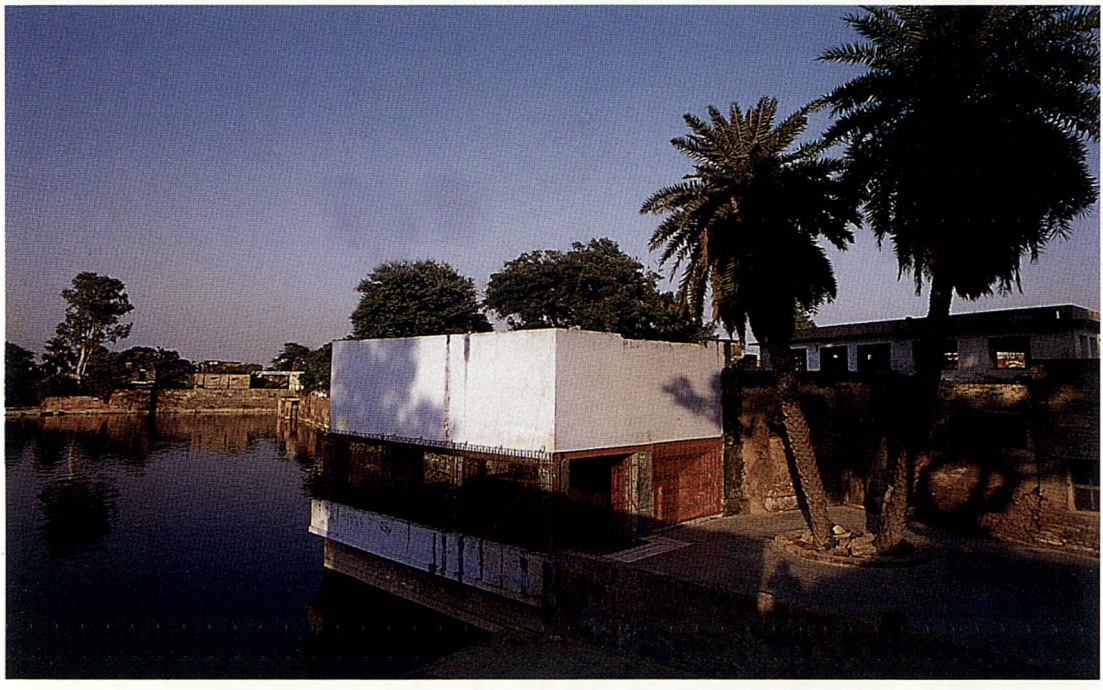
The Gaura-gaṇoddeśa-dipikā says that Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī was Rāsa-mañjarī in Kṛṣṇa's pastimes. Sometimes it is said he was Rati-mañjarī. In the sacred memory of Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī, a twenty four hour akhand kīrtana is being performed next to his samādhi.

63. Tongue of Govardhana (Jivhā Mandīra)

Jihvā in Sanskrit or *Jihbyā* in Bengali, means tongue and in this small temple can be seen the sacred tongue of Govardhana. After Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī had excavated both Rādhā-kuṇḍa and Śyāma-kuṇḍa, he decided to dig a separate well so that local residents would not have to use the sacred waters of Rādhā-kuṇḍa for washing clothes or cleaning cooking utensils.

A group of workers started digging a well just opposite Mādhavendra Purī's *baithaka*. During the course of the digging, the workers struck a rock which immediately started to bleed profusely. Horrified, the workers stopped digging and ran to Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī to inform him of the incident. Raghunātha dāsa told the men to stop work as some offence may have been committed.

The sacred tongue of Govardhana



The sitting place of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu on the banks of Śyama-kuṇḍa

That night Raghunātha had a dream in which Lord Giri-Govardhana appeared and informed him that the rock that had been struck, and started to bleed, was the Lord's own tongue. Lord Giri-Govardhana then asked Raghunātha to remove the rock of Govardhana from the well and worship it daily with *tulasī* leaves and water from Rādhā-kuṇḍa. One who circumambulates this tongue of Govardhana seven times, receives the same benefit as circumambulating the whole of Govardhana Hill.

64. Mahāprabhu's Baiṭhāka

This is the very spot on the sacred banks of Śyāma-kuṇḍa, where Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu sat in contemplation under a *tamāla* tree, just before discovering Rādhā-kuṇḍa and Śyāma-kuṇḍa. This place is also known as Tamāla-tala after the sacred *tamāla* tree that grows here. The present tree is an offshoot of the original one under which Lord Caitanya sat. The *ghāṭa* nearby is known as Tamāla-tala-ghāṭa. Within the red granite shrine is the impression of Lord Caitanyas lotus footprints. We can understand why the Lord chose this spot to sit down because of the wonderful view it affords of the two sacred *kuṇḍas.*

It is not surprising that the Vedic scriptures inform us that Lord Caitanya is the most munificent incarnation of God. By revealing the hidden location of both Rādhā-kuṇḍa and Śyāma-kuṇḍa, the Lord has given His devotees, and the world, the unique gift of the most sacred of all the sacred *tirthas* within creation. Generation after generation of *Vaiṣṇavas* the world-over, can come here to Rādhā-kuṇḍa and simply by anointing their heads with the sacred waters of these transcendental lakes, can achieve the greatest benediction of divine love, equal to that of Śri Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.

Sunset at Rādhā-kuṇḍa

Chronology of Important Events in the Gauḍīya *Vaiṣṇava* Sampradaya

1473 Appearance of Lord Nityānanda.
1479 Mādhavendra Purī visits Vṛndāvana.
1479 Mādhavendra Purī establishes worship of Śrī Gopāla Rāya
1482 Advaita Ācārya takes *dikṣa* in Vṛndāvana from Mādhavendra Purī.
1483 Appearance of Lokanātha Gosvāmī.
1486 Appearance of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu.
1487 Appearance of Gadādhara Paṇḍita.
1488 Appearance of Sanātana Gosvāmī.
1489 Appearance of Rūpa Gosvāmī.
1491 Disappearance of Mādhavendra Purī.
1491 Viśvarūpa (Lord Caitanya's brother) takes *sanny sa*.
1494 Appearance of Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī.
1496 Appearance of Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmi.
1503 Appearance of Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī.
1505 Appearance of Raghunātha Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī.
1509 Lokanātha Gosvāmī and Bhugarbha Gosvāmī come to Vṛndāvana.
1510 Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu takes *sanny sa*.
1513 Appearance of Jiva Gosvāmī.
1515 Lord Caitnaya Mahāprabhu visits Vṛndāvana.
1516 Rūpa and Sanātana come to Vṛndāvana.
1516 Prabodhānanda Sarasvatī Gosvāmī comes to Vṛndāvana.
1534 Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhuś disappearance.
1534 Appearance of Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura.
1535 Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī comes to Vṛndāvana.
1535 Jiva Gosvāmī comes to Vṛndāvana.
1541 Disappearance of Lord Nityānanda.
1541 Completion of *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* by Rūpa Gosvāmī.
1545 Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī starts excavation of Rādhā-kuṇḍa.
1550 Disappearance of Advaita Ācārya.

1554 Completion of Rādhā-kuṇḍa and Śyāma-kuṇḍa.
1558 Disappearance of Sanātana Gosvāmī.
1564 Disappearance of Rūpa Gosvāmī.
1570 Emperor Akbar meets Jīva Gosvāmī in Vṛndāvana.
1571 Disappearance of Raghunātha Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmi.
1575 Completion of *Caitanya-bhāgavata* by Vṛndāvana dāsa Ṭhākura.
1576 Jīva Gosvāmī appointed *Mahānta* of Rādhā-kuṇḍa.
1578 Disappearance of Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī.
1580 Temple of Madana-mohana opens at Vṛndāvana.
1581 Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī completes *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*.
1582 Disappearance of Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmi.
1583 Disappearance of Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī.
1585 Disappearance of Lokanātha Gosvāmī.
1590 Govindaji Mandira opens in Vṛndāvana.
1608 Disappearance of Jīva Gosvāmī.
1611 Disappearance of Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura.
1630 Disappearance of Śyāmānanda Paṇḍita Gosvāmī
1638 Appearance of Viśvanātha Cakravarti Ṭhākura.
1670 Emperor Aurangzeb attacks Vṛndāvana.
1708 Disappearance of Viśvanātha Cakravarti Ṭhākura.
1838 Appearance of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura.
1874 Appearance of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvati Gosvāmī.
1896 Appearance of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda.
1914 Disappearance of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura.
1915 Disappearance of Gaura Kishore dāsa Babaji Mahārāja.
1933 Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda initiated by Śrīla Bhakitsiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmi at Allahabad.
1935 Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda meets Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmi at Rādhā-kuṇḍa.
1936 Disappearance of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvati Gosvāmī.
1954 Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda takes *vānaprastha*.
1956 Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda arrives in Vṛndāvana.
1959 Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda takes *sannyāsa*.
1965 Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda sails to America.
1966 Incorporation of ISKCON in New York, U.S.A.
1975 Śrī Śrī Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma Mandira opens in Vṛndāvana.
1977 Disappearance of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedānta Swami Prabhupāda.

Glossary

A

Abhiṣeka - Bathing ceremony.
Ācārya - One who teaches by example.
Aṣṭa-kāliyā-līlā Kṛṣṇa's eight-fold daily pastimes.

B

Bhajana - Meditational practices especially chanting and hearing.
Bhajana-kutira - Small cottage or hut used for practicing meditation.
Brāhmaṇa - A wise and cultured person well-versed in Vedic knowledge

C

Camara - Fly wisk used in Deity worship.

D

Daṇḍavata- Offering obeicences by lying flat like a stick.
Darshana - Seeing the form of the Lord in a temple.
Dauji- Name of Balarāma meaning elder brother.

E

Ekādaśī - Eleventh day after both the full and waning moon.

G

Gauḍīya Vaiśnava - A devotee following in the line of Lord Caitanya.
Ghāta - Bathing place on the bank of a river or lake.
Ghee - Clarified butter.
Gopīs - Cowherd girlfriends of Lord Kṛṣṇa.
Gopas - Cowherd boyfriends of Lord Kṛṣṇa.
Gosvāmī - A holy man who can control the mind and senses.

J

Japa - Soft chanting on beads.

K

Kali-yuga - The present age lasting 432,000 years.
Kirtana - The chanting of the holy names accompanied by drums and cymbals.
Kuṇḍa - A small pond or lake.
Kuñja - A garden of bushes and flower trees.

L

Linga- Deity form of Lord Śiva.

M

Mandīra - A temple of the Lord.
Maṅgala-ārati - The daily pre-dawn worship of the Deity.

Glossary

Mañjarī -	A maidservant of Śrīmatī Rādhārāni.
Mūrti-	Form of the Deity.

P

Pañca-gavya-	5 ingredients produced by cows and used in worship.
Pancāmṛta-	5 substances used for abhiṣeka (honey, yogurt, milk, ghee and sugar water).
Paṇḍita -	A learned *brāhmaṇa*.
Parikramā -	Circumambulation of a holy place or temple.
Prakata Sthali-	Appearance place.
Pratibhu-mūrti -	A replica of the original Deity having the same spiritual potency.
Pūjārī -	A priest serving the Deity in the temple.
Pūja-	To perform worship.
Pūrnimā-	Full moon day.
Puruṣottama Mas-	The leap month in the Vedic calendar once every three years.

R

Rāsa-līlā -	The Lord's pastime of dancing with the *gopīs*.
Rāsa Sthali-	The actual spot where the *rāsa-līlā* took place.

S

Sakhī-	A girlfriend of Rādhāranī.
Samādhi -	The tomb of a saint.
Sannyāsi -	The person in the renounced order of life.
Sarovara-	A large lake.
Sthali -	A sacred place.
Sthana -	Place of appearance.
Sudarśana Cakra-	The disk like weapon of Lord Kṛṣṇa.
Syāma-	Name of Kṛṣṇa meaning dark complexioned.

T

Tīrtha-	A holy place.

V

Vaiśnava -	A devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa or Viṣṇu.
Vana-	A forest.
Vraja -	The entire area of Vṛndāvana *Dhāma*.
Vrajavāsī -	An inhabitant of Vṛndāvana *Dhāma*.

Y

Yajña-	A sacrifice.

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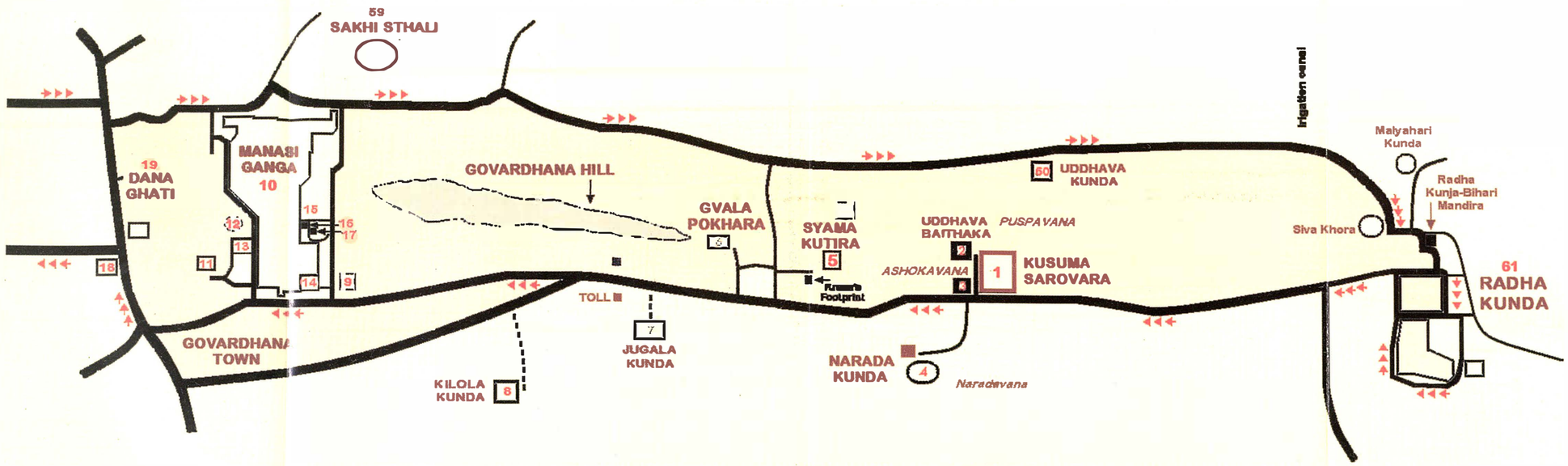

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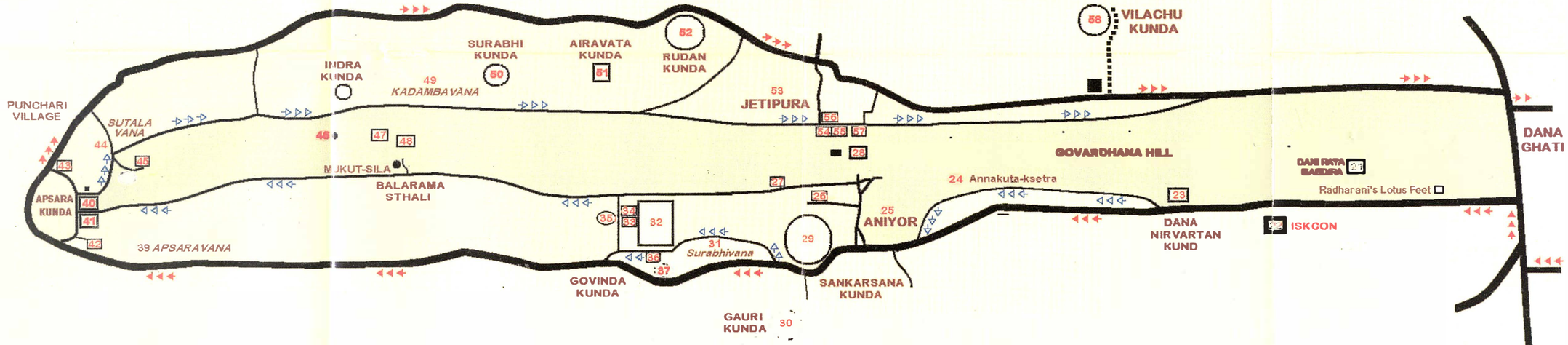

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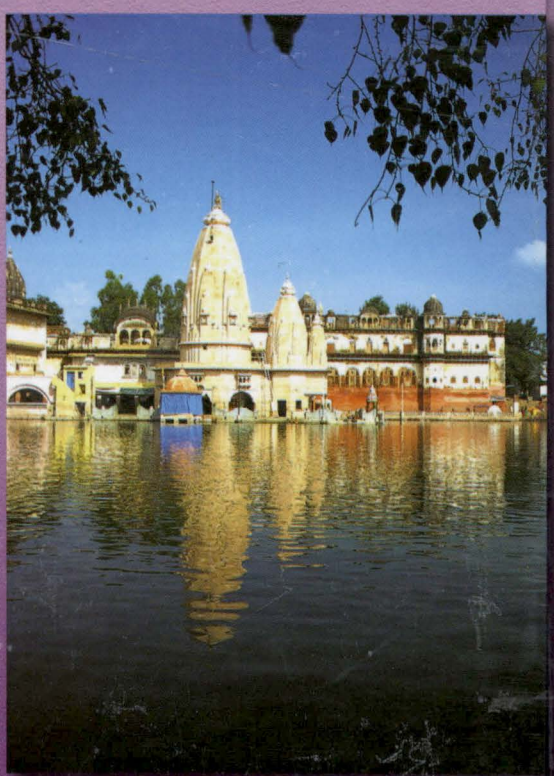

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